



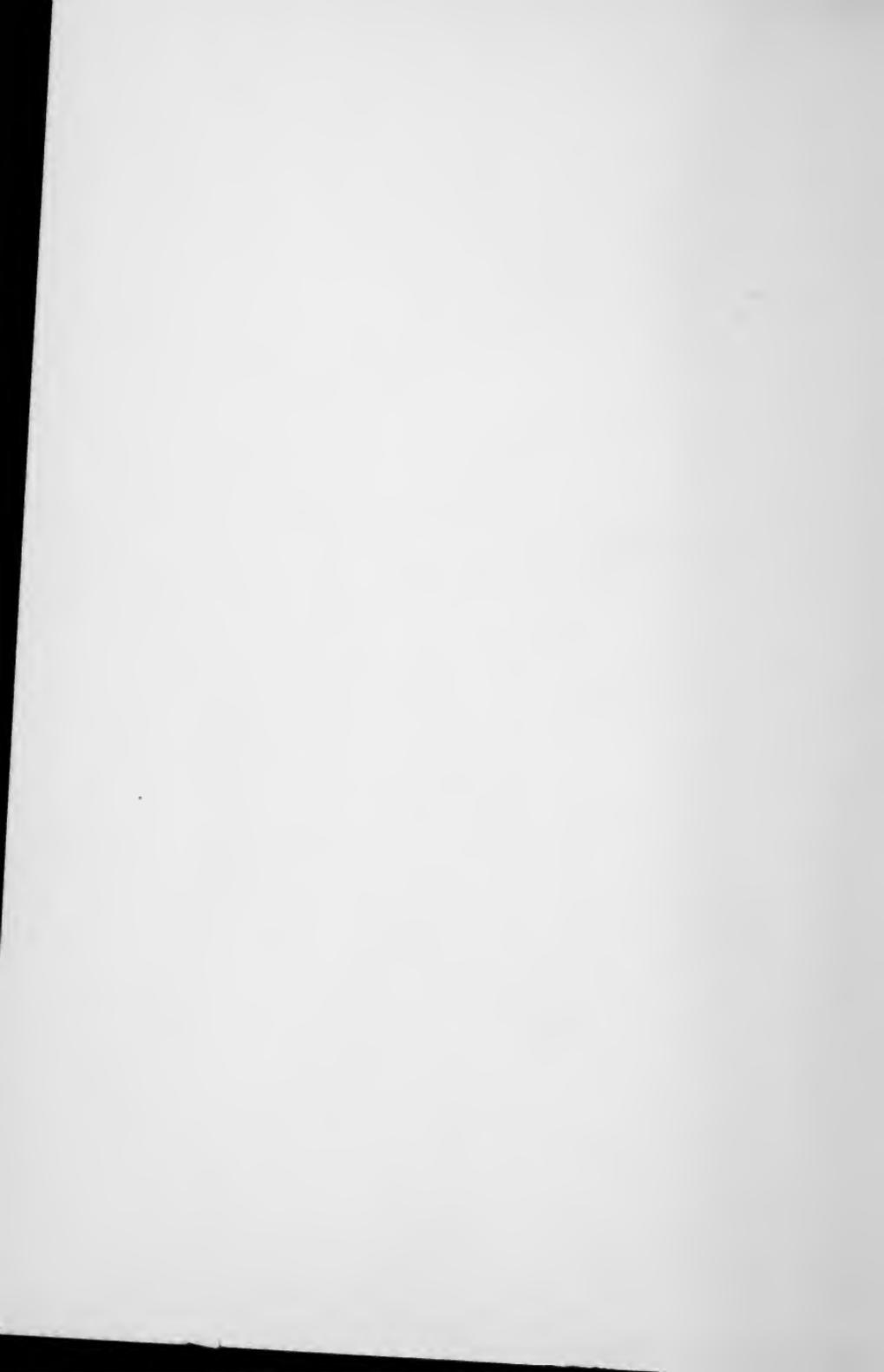


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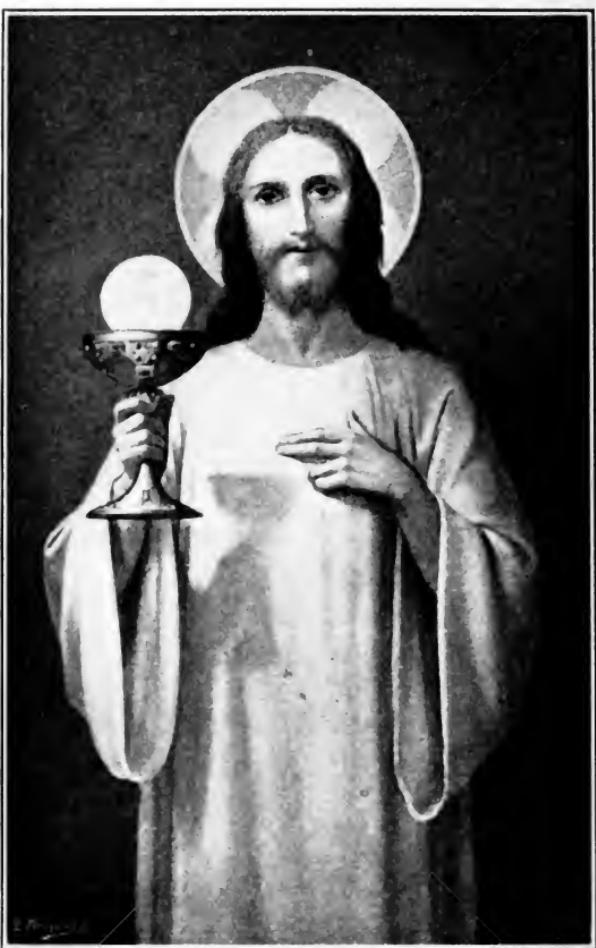
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**THE HOLY VIATICUM OF LIFE
AS OF DEATH**





THE LIVING BREAD

"Lord, give us always this Bread."—*St. John vi: 34.*

THE HOLY VIATICUM OF LIFE AS OF DEATH

BY

REV. DANIEL A. *Fr. Daniel* DEVER, PH.D., D.D.



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PREFACE

The memory of some simple hymn,—still wholly unknown to the writer,—but concerning the gentle Saint Stanislaus, is amongst the earliest and most vivid of his childhood's recollections; and its faintly persistent echoes led in later years to an eager search into this seraphic saint's most wondrous life history, that most marvelous narrative of innocence fed from on high; and this entrancing study resulted, in its turn, in a deep and fond affection for this angelic youth; an affection which may be epitomized in the fact that for a long period the reading of his beautiful death-scene closed each toilsome day.' Still later, the untold privilege of many years in Rome, some as a priest of God, permitted a sacred famil-

arity with the glorified saint's sanctified memorials, and often allowed even the celebration of Mass, the consecration of the ineffable "Viaticum Vitæ Mortisque," the "Holy Viaticum of Life as of Death," right over the sacred remains it had so often and so wondrously vivified and sustained during their lonesome earthly wanderings; and the subsequent years of continuous priestly activity, with its necessarily continued observance of souls that faltered and fell, or that struggled and rose, have not dulled, but have deepened, all these multiplied thoughts of life's testing problems and of their instant solution in that beautiful soul's most heavenly power. These pages, therefore, though few and brief, still fondly record a life's long impressions, the purest delight of its loftier moments, a star, never wholly eclipsed, of days that were overcast. And now, on the verge of the weakening years that lead without joy to the grave, the need and the

power of life's only sufficient Viaticum form well-nigh the same pondering mind's only study, the same soul's only refuge, and the same heart's only peace; so that youth's early thoughts of a saint and of his Heavenly Food have returned, in intensified power, with its earliest love, to cheer life's fast-sinking hours, and to give them a strength they need.

If, therefore, the wonderful goodness of God should ever be so kind to me as to deign, kind soul,—who art, and ever must remain, all unknown to me,—to bring this little book to your compassionate gaze when I am gone, I deeply trust that you will prize at least its simple history, instinct, as it is, with the most sacred emotions of at least one human heart and one trying human life; not forgetting, perhaps, to breathe an earnest prayer for him whose now chill fingers penned these very words for you one lonely night, after spending many others on those that follow. He found solace and strength in

trying to weave their mystic beauty together. May you find equal peace in disengaging their deeper meanings, as your delicately considerate study gently draws their tangled web apart; and may heaven give the full response, in your case, and in mine, to all that struggles faintly for just expression here.

WASHINGTON, D. C.,
February, 1911.

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THE HOLY VIATICUM OF LIFE AS OF DEATH

PRELIMINARY

AN introduction not wholly, perhaps, unfitted for the following pages may, it is hoped, be found in the simple statement of fact that, as the years have stretched their trying course, the old and most expressive idea of life as a journey linked itself ever more and more closely in the mind of the writer with that infinitely significant Christian concept, the Holy Viaticum; and that both, thus united, took further and more definite form in his thought as they found a spontaneous expression of exquisite grace in the marvelous life of Saint Stanislaus Kostka; a men-

tal development due without doubt to the fact that this beautiful saint's most typical act of high Christian perfection was precisely a journey of hundreds and hundreds of miles marked by most wonderful Holy Communions; an action thus serving to symbolize fully a Christian life-journey on earth sustained by a heavenly food. Around this central conception, by a kind of instinctive and most pleasing convergence, there gathered the more prominent features of the saint's general life, a life rendered wholly celestial by the same sacramental means; and this blending of holiest beauty, human with divine, has here been necessarily prefaced and followed by some further related ideas which it naturally brought in its beautiful train. There has been no attempt at severe logical sequence or rigorous didactic instruction, since the Savior's own gentle desire,¹ expressed in His love's sacramental appeal, has seemed better fitted for the

¹ Luke xii. 49.

heart's instant returning affection than for cold intellectual action on the part of the mind. It only remains to be added that, in fullest accord with this unavoidably lofty, yet uncritical, unquestioning trend of the thought, every word thus unstudiously written must now be left here in its present form, like a voiceless marble angel in some silent wayside fane, beside the lonely tabernacle of Him whose infinite love it has, through no fault of its own, so fondly, yet vainly, sought to express. We ourselves still must onward wander, along earth's cruel pathways, to seek and to find the crimson traces of those sacred feet once so deeply wearied and so deeply wounded, like our own, in the noisy outside world; still seeking and still finding our only rest and our only strength where He Himself reposes, in each more distant sanctuary that so blessedly marks the ever more arid reaches of life's otherwise desperate, hopeless way, till we sink at last at His

opened side by the brink of life's last deep and darkling void; finding there, with the shadows falling fast around us, and in the pure ecstasy of affections chastened and refined, the glorious reality so faintly figured forth in these fond expressions of earlier, more impetuous love, uttered by a more vehement heart in the leaping ardors of the long ago.

I. A THRENODY

*“O Salutaris Hostia,
Quae coeli pandis ostium.”¹*

FOR “Death,” though the last word, is still the first thought, of this, our sadly, yet sweetly, suggestive title; since its primal term, the mystic “Viaticum,” once dear to the solitary traveler’s anxious heart, as meaning the needful provision for his lonely way, has risen, in its own long journey through the centuries, to an import incomparably more tender than

¹ “O saving Host,
That openest heaven’s gate.”—*The “O Salutaris.”*

even this most kindly and thoughtful significance of its ancient Latin use. It has become, it is true, the sombre synonym of death's supremely saddened hour; but it has also become the glorious symbol of a deathless Hope that can make that last, dread hour triumphant, and change its naturally despairing sorrow into the highest supernatural joy. At first, this solemn word falls upon the ear, only as the ominous knell of life's dark close; as the inexorable, even though sacred, portent and pressage of its utter, overwhelming ruin, its seemingly complete destruction and annihilation. It tells us of man's deepest and most helpless sorrow, of his one great irreparable woe, the inconsolable grief that shrouds the pitiful end of his fitful earthly existence. The first whispered tones of the Holy Viaticum now inevitably bring with them the unutterable sorrow of life's last farewell, the hopeless agonies of dissolution, and the pale, icy hues of death. They tell

of a father, a brother, stumbling weakly forth from a threshold that shall never know him more; of some gentle soul, perhaps, surrounded in vain by every resource and every solace that wealth or love can give; of some lonely outcast, it may be, leaving a cold and hated world to which he can never again direct even one last, lingering, resentful glance. All holy, therefore, though it be, this now so sadly sacred word seems at first to chill the very sunshine, and to cast a sombre gloom even over nature's fairest scene.

But later, and after the first unavoidable desolation of departing life's last, despairing sorrow, a higher, a spiritual, significance steals upon us, like the deep chastened tones of some distant cathedral tower; and as its sacred beauty sinks softly to the depths of the soul and lulls each startled sense, we seem to see the hidden Sacrament of the Altar leaving its almost unbroken seclusion, and hastening, in the hands of the silently moving priest,

to some poor sufferer's bedside, there to enter his sinking heart and fainting soul, and thus become their strength and their support in the last, dark night of time and in the even more dread white flash of eternity's pitiless, searching day. In thought we see the glazing eye and failing heart that now seem so far from this world, only because they are so very near another; that sink so irresponsive to all their ordinary allurements and attachments, only because they now discern a higher light, a purer beauty, and a deeper meaning, than any this world can give; and we instinctively turn with the highest hope and a holy exultation to the sacred Viaticum thus borne to become the Divine Interpreter of these dread mysteries and the Divine Companion of the fearful way. A sanctified sadness, deeply touched with this lofty hope and heavenly consolation, settles down upon the heart; and, unconsciously, we think of ourselves, and ask ourselves timidly, when, and

where, shall death and its great Consoler find us, when earth is fading away, and eternity is already setting its indelible seal upon our wavering, fluttering souls.

Our answer, indeed, would be darkest despair, did we not feel that this gentle Viaticum will be with us, as our infinitely kind and powerful Guide; but with it, we feel that no foe can molest us; that our passage from earth, though sad, shall be safe; and thus its last echoes linger sweet on the ear, breathing softly of heaven's high beauty; and they rest in our uttermost souls, as an inestimable treasure reserved for our saddest of days; so that, with this beautiful word, the first gloom of the darkest of nights gives place to the thought of an eternally glorious dawn; to a vision of peace and of beauty in heaven, in the love and the presence of God.

II. RETROSPECTIVE

*“Qui profert de thesauro
suo nova et vetera.”¹*

IN this higher and holier view of the Most Sacred Viaticum, as in so many of the other priceless heritages of the Church, we do but imitate our distant forefathers in the Faith, who saw the deep beauty of the Latin word and its fitness to rise to an incomparably higher significance. And we do well, in thus following the unerring instinct of the earliest

¹ “Who bringeth forth out of his treasure new things and old.”—Matt. xiii. 52.

Christian heart, by linking, as we do, this ancient word with life's last, critical hour; since all its primitive uses deeply conspire to suggest and explain the sacred choice. For, in the old, old days, before the Church itself had even begun to exist, the pagan peoples had given to this now supremely sanctified term many most consoling and most kindly significant meanings, which still remain very deep and most precious in the wealth of their heavenly beauty and power, and still capable of a true and most proper application here, in the very midst of the mournful scene that has risen, almost unconsciously, before our sadly pensive minds. For, at first, the ancient "vaticum" stood for the weary soldier's pay after his days of battles; after costly fields, sometimes, it may be, laxly, yet, on the whole, faithfully, disputed; and often right desperately and right nobly won. It later meant for him, when his last campaigns were over, the means of returning

home, of reaching once more his vine-clad cottage, of rejoining, after many weary, blood-stained years, such as were left of the loved ones for whom all his toils were so ardently undertaken and so inflexibly sustained; and for whom, perhaps, his own warrior blood had been more than once most willingly and most prodigally shed. Later still, it came to mean the actual provision for his homeward journey, the simple fare rudely placed in his torn and discolored wallet for the more pressing needs of his last long march; and it finally passed far beyond the soldierly ranks altogether, and indicated, in a general way, whatever could sustain and console any wandering exile's weakness, a store for any lonely traveler's way. And under all these most varied and most touching aspects, as no one can fail to perceive, unnumbered most appropriate and suggestive analogies arise, almost unbidden, between these kindly senses of the ancient term, applied where

they centre now, around life's last, decisive hour, and the thought, for the same dread moment, of the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar; which thus becomes the reward of struggle and danger, the support of the soldier's return, the Bread of the pilgrim's pathway, the means of reaching our heavenly home, the most sacred store for our own last, great journey, the beauteous "Viaticum Mortis," the strength and the solace of otherwise inconsolable death.

For what, in very truth, is that parting to which the Holy Viaticum comes but the close of a long and bitter struggle borne with at least substantial fidelity? Is it not the mortally wounded soldier falling at last and dying, but still under the banner of his first and faithful choice? Is it not the first, deeply yearning effort of the wounded soul to regain its native land on high, a seeking to rejoin those kindred spirits from whom its whole life here below has been but a painful and grievous separation, none the less bitter,

because half unconsciously borne? Ah, yes! It is all this, and much more, and in an incomparably higher sense, than we can ever fully conceive in our at present heavily clouded earthly minds, or express in our feeble earthly language. Surely, for the poor, falling soldier, and for his broken pathway home, we may, and should, remember, in holy union with the incomparably greater specific spiritual significances of the Sacrament, these other lesser aspects, yet most true and most beautiful meanings, of reward for his final struggle and of aid for his fateful way. For these kindly, thoughtful uses of the ancient term work no injury to the greater sanctities of the Adorable Eucharist, or to the unparalleled spiritual beauty associated with our first sacred thought of the Most Holy Viaticum. They do but gracefully wreath it round, like the most tender and delicate ivy, and only serve to illustrate in the most deeply and gently appealing manner, what we might

be permitted to call this magnificent Sacrament's more humble and more human aspects. No term could be more appropriate, and no "viaticum" could be conceived more fully or more tenderly adapted for the soul's every requirement. Indeed, it was precisely because of these so thoughtfully consoling ancient purports of this now eternal word that there came and there remained the commanding thought of death; and that all were finally and most fittingly crystallized into their present consecrated form of sacred sacramental association with sanctified death's all-beautiful hour, and with the silent Watcher who is the secret of its calmness and its peace. So far, therefore, from derogating in any degree from the infinite dignity of the great Sacrament with which they are now inseparably associated, they do very much to give a truer and a deeper appreciation of all that is meant by that sacred name, the "Holy Viaticum." They aid most efficiently in caus-

ing it to become for us what it really is in itself, the sweet harbinger and synonym of the soul's last, victorious struggle, of its silent yet decisive triumph, of the anxious heart's last yet complete reassurance and solace, of the faithful soldier's glorious final battle, of his last earthly recompense and his high reward. Surely, this personal visit of his Chief—and such a Chief—may well rekindle even the humbled warrior's death-dimmed eye, and form the single, all-sufficient requital for toils and for sorrows that seemed so long unheeded and unknown! And surely, thoughts such as these should do something to smooth the cold white pillow of our own last earthly repose.

III. BEYOND THE VEIL

*“Numquid apertae sunt
tibi portae mortis, et ostia
tenebrosa vidisti?”¹*

A FURTHER truth, also, and one most beautiful and significant, too, lies deeply imbedded here; for, were we still to follow the all but inspired instincts of the days when the Faith was new, we should readily see that from this final wealth of sacred significance which thus clustered around the Blessed Sacrament's last visit to the

¹ “Have the gates of death been opened to thee, and hast thou seen the darksome doors?”—Job xxxviii. 17.

soul, and so gracefully interwove itself into the rapidly changing texture of human life at man's departure from this world, the Christian mind and heart, again not alien to classic ideals that involved any deep or important thought, adopted and refined that concept—the cry of nature, as of grace—which retains the idea of death as a journey, as an exile's pathway of supreme trial and danger, as a need for some heavenly guidance and some supernatural support. Nor was this first deep instinct of the pagan heart at fault, nor was its more lofty Christian form deceived. For death is, indeed, a most momentous journey, the greatest that we shall ever take. Its earthly term we know, but its farther goal is far, very far, away. Here, it is most abject and lowly; but its further reaches stretch forth beyond our gaze to things of supremest import. It is a setting forth that shall never know even a faltering, tardy return. It is a pathway that leads from the narrow

confines of time, through shrouded weeping valleys, to the white gleaming sands of eternity's limitless sea; through murky realms of unknown gloom to silently breaking billows that leap from no further shore; to the sleeping silver sheen of still waters that no keel shall ever plough; to an ocean which frowns under vast seeming battlements, but which laves no buttressed keep. And still it stretches loftily and steadily on, through endless and ineffable marvels, ever rising more and more swiftly in its far-glittering flight, to vast hidden peaks incomparably more glorious than where the lonely mountain eagle wings his regal way; and it plunges at last, lost in its own very magnificence, into wide heaven-wrought splendors rolling in impetuous majesty onward, and ever creating new worlds as they go, until the unearthly, ethereal grandeur of its mystic, transfiguring charm, flames, unconfined and immensurate, across all the infinite, ecstatic splendors of that Perfect Life

which gleams with endless beauty, and forever flames forth the all-sufficient answer to highest human thought and purest human aspiration—or, alas! it leaps to the loss of all these in the finally fatal eclipse of eternity's hopeless night! Before this dread alternative, the parting soul pauses for a moment, then tests the wide unknown; and only God can say whither its further flight has tended.

But upon these darker possibilities we touch most unwillingly here. It is true that it is they that, in the last analysis, lend its most dreadful import to anything that we can say of death; and that they explain, with utmost eloquence, the need and the value of the Most Holy Viaticum. But we are engaged now more especially with the kinder aspects of our sacred theme. We are dwelling upon the gentle, forgiving Savior and His last repose in a trial-tossed yet faithful soul; in a broken, it may be, yet humble and contrite heart; a heart that He Himself has said shall

never be confounded; a heart, therefore, and a soul that never shall feel, in their higher powers, the fatal touch of the destroying angel's hand; but shall pass unharmed, at their Savior's side, through all that even death can bring, through even the darkest and gloomiest passes of death itself. We are thinking now of the Good Samaritan who came from a far country, who has Himself trodden all this world's shrouded pathways in search of our anguished souls, and who has sought them even through the very gates of death itself, through death in the utter abandonment of His Heavenly Father; an abandonment possible, permitted, and borne, only because there was a God to endure it; only because the Good Shepherd wished, as it were, to be sure that no poor, stricken souls were lost in a dereliction deeper than His own; that none were wandering, affrighted and helpless, in the mystic lands beyond the fatal ford. Nay, we are thinking of Him who chose this very death of

bitterest rejection, precisely that we might have life and might have it more abundantly.¹ We are looking toward Him to whom the Church, in every Mass, cries out, "Son of the Living God, who by Thy death hast given life to the world!" To Him we look to span, with that eternal life here meant, the dark chasm that yawns before man's last earthly footstep, and from which our whole nature so powerfully recoils, at the farther brink of its earthly career; and it is thus precisely here that we all turn with hearts so deeply palpitating with the deepest of trust and the fondest of love to the Most Holy Vaticum, the sweet, gentle Guardian and Guide of our perilous way.

Leaving, however, our path for a moment, it has seemed to us well, though with diffidence, to recall, in connection with thoughts such as those that now rest in our minds, and in a kind of digression and pause, a few not wholly irrelevant words

¹ John x. 10.

in regard to the passing of a naturally gentle soul; words written by a most thoughtful poet of the ever romantic Southland,¹ one who himself has but recently passed from his own softly melodious measures of earth, through death's overshadowed pathways, to the higher and holier harmonies of heaven. It may seem that his lines should require some vague, implicit apology, because of their commoner, earthly character; and yet it was felt that they seemed to enshrine, with a faultless grace, a thought far too precious to be lightly omitted here.

“Death seemed afraid to wake her;
For, traversing the deep,
When home he came to take her,
He kept her fast asleep.

“And haply in her dreaming
Of many a race to run,
She woke, with rapture beaming,
To find the voyage done.”

¹ Rev. Father Tabb.

These are gentle, reassuring thoughts; and even the most timorous soul, with the very Bread of the Angels for its sustenance, and in the intimate companionship of its Heavenly Guide, may well transfer to itself, with an infinitely higher meaning, and to the Sacred Vaticulum, in an incomparably higher sense, the simple words just quoted; for, although it is certain that, even without this glorious special aid, the kindly care foreshadowed here would be not only realized, but would also be immeasurably surpassed, by the unfailing solicitude of God's ordinary fatherly providence; yet we all know that the fainting soul scarce dares presume so much; and that, so long as humanity shall be stained and guilty and falling, so long as our failings loom large in the past's just perspective, so long as we cannot know that other, wondrous world,—so long shall we sigh for the personal word of forgiveness at last, so long shall we yearn for the mighty yet gentle

Viaticum, of which we have all so loved to speak, and which is placed here, as the very first word of all that the fondest of thought shall be able to find, or the purest affection shall avail to inspire, concerning the most glorious of heaven's gifts and the most pressing and urgent of all human needs. Surely, death is a most momentous journey; and surely, Christ is most kind, in coming to be its Support and its Guide; and, surely, fond Christian hearts did well, in recognizing and in loving the Most Blessed Sacrament, under the supremely consoling guise of the Holy Viaticum, the Divine Companion of life's last journey, Death.

IV. THE PRESENT

*“Bella premunt hostilia,
Da robur, fer auxilium.”¹*

BUT there are journeys in life, not less than in death; journeys and pathways, too, of supremest trial and danger; journeys and moments in which the same heavenly guidance and the same heavenly strength are absolutely necessary for us, and necessary with an imperativeness that may even be said to surpass, under some aspects, that of death itself. In

¹ “The foe’s fierce battles press,
Give strength, and bear us aid.”—*The “O Salutaris.”*

that solemn hour, the presence of eternity is a safeguard that life's heedless pride forgets. At death, the incitements to evil have all but lost their power; in life, it is the incentives to virtue that fade so completely away; and the vague thought of some future repentance is too often only an additional ambush in which the poor soul receives its last blow. At death, our demoniac enemy has only his external resources and the beggarly subterfuge of a baseless despair; since startled nature then wholly abhors his now loathsome appeal; but in life, his ally is pleasure, and he is aided by many a dark foe from within. Where, think you, are the souls of the many destroyed? Is it on the still, narrow, timorous, trembling bed of death; or on the broad, open, arrogant, sensual plain of life? Are the hues of sin ghastly, or do they gleam with the pomp and the color of life? Our greatest foe is the body; where is it strongest, in life, or in death? No pos-

sible doubt can surround the true heart's unprejudiced answer. The unhappy soul is most often ruined, before it reaches the portals of death. Surely, therefore, no one would seek to affirm that this perilous life, thus filled with every danger, does not need a celestial Viaticum, or that Christ need not come, until it is passing away? A more accurate test would reveal our own selfish hearts as inspiring both death's undue trepidation and life's even more excessive assurance. Death holds no terrors, save those which life has placed in its hands. It is frightful only so far as our lives have been evil; and he is most sadly imprudent who guards not his life as his measure and standard of death, or deems it a task that he can accomplish alone. No one who has taken even the first few paces in this troubled earthly existence, and certainly no one who has trodden through the weary years in its desolate pathways, can fail to feel that man's life in this world is truly a

warfare,¹ or that his days are those of constant trial and danger. Individual experience only too fully confirms this divinely annunciated primary truth; and also adds another equally important, and of equal divine promulgation, that God's help alone can turn our deadly peril into victory. Our earthly pathway is so constantly beset, and by so many mortal enemies, that heaven's own aid is indispensably necessary, since we ourselves are but ill equipped for so many insistent foes. And the divinely constituted aid for our life is precisely the same as the divinely constituted aid for our death. It is the same Blessed Sacrament, under the lamentably unfamiliar, nay, well-nigh unknown, yet withal most true and most beautiful, name of the "Viaticum of Life." Whatever, therefore, the heedless outside world may do, we, at least, should never forget this infinite Sacrament's present import and power. Its

¹ Job vii. 1.

primary and principal, yet almost forgotten intention and efficacy, as the strength of our pathway while still here on earth, is not less indispensable for us than its strengthening presence at death. It is not less deep in the Savior's mind. In His all-wise and ever-thoughtful providence, the constant Viaticum of Life forms the only proper preparation for the momentary Viaticum of Death. "Except you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, you shall not have life in you,"¹ He said, and thus most clearly proclaimed the Adorable Sacrament of the Altar as the necessary support of daily Christian life, not less than of pious, humble, Christian death; and surely, we should never attempt the ungrateful and useless task of seeking to prove His divine words untrue, by trying to live, any more than by daring to die, without His heavenly aid. Many, indeed, are the aspects under which this

¹ John vi. 54.

glorious Sacrament is the strength of our days upon earth, and the soul in their study is lost in the wealth of its love. The heart can here thread many beauteous pathways, finding ever new glories and splendors far exceeding its own even most loftily yearning demands. Any view of this Adorable Sacrament, therefore, and any thought of the Most Holy Viaticum, which fails to include this whole circle of our Savior's universal beneficence, must remain hopelessly wanting and wholly inadequate; since it utterly fails to recognize in Him the necessary support of daily life, not less than of instant death. While, then, we shall never forget the beauteous final significance of the Holy Viaticum, on which we have been so lovingly dwelling—nay, while we shall most fondly return to this very meaning, which has thus far so thrilled the very depths of our hearts—we shall, nevertheless, strive with even more of insistence and earnestness, now,

to speak more fully of that same Most Holy Viaticum, of that same Blessed Sacrament, in the more primal and less usual, though in nowise less true or less beautiful sense of strength and support for the greater peril and the greater need of the sorely tried earthly wayfarer; of solace and hope in the still earthly traveler's long, weary day; of protection and guidance in the darkened and perilous pathways of present trial and sorrow; of divine companionship for dangerous earthly footsteps; of the necessary—yet oh! so happily and so calmly efficient—sustenance and strength of our fainting souls, in the sharp instant tests or the slow-torturing martyrdom of daily and hourly earthly existence, throughout the whole course of the soul's lonely exile in an alien and hostile world. For thus alone can we hope completely to justify, and with full symmetry to integrate, our entire beloved and inspiring title, which enshrines and enbosoms an infinite

thought, by showing our Divine Lord in the Blessed Sacrament to be, through its glorious all-embracing power, the one Support of all our earthly wanderings and of the steps that lead beyond; the sacred "Viaticum Vitæ Mortisque," the "Holy Viaticum of Life as of Death."

V. AN INVITATION

*“Sapiens . . . in ter-
ram alienigenarum genti-
um pertransiet: bona en-
im et mala in hominibus
tentabit.”¹*

IN the fulfilment of this splendid design—whose magnificence, indeed, might well induce even the angels to aid us—we are to speak, in the first place, of a journey in the ordinary, literal sense of that word; a journey with both its ter-

¹ “The wise man . . . shall pass into strange countries; for he shall try good and evil among men.”—Eccl. xxxix. 5.

minals here on earth, though not, indeed, with manners or methods now grown so familiar to us all. And perhaps we should say once more that the lonely traveler whose weary footsteps we are to follow is the youthful saint whom we mentioned in our opening words, a seraph of heaven rather than a child of earth; no other, indeed, than the beautiful Saint Stanislaus Kostka. Our reason? The fact, as we also said there, that the indelible memory of his angelic life linked itself in the mind, as gracefully as unbidden, with the glorious thought of the Most Blessed Sacrament as a divine life-sustaining power; and that the beautiful bond, thus unconsciously formed, seemed far too sacred and too fair for the shattering touch of a thoughtless hand. For the life of this saint was undoubtedly intended by heaven to give, in a most luminous manner, open to all, an engaging portrayal of the glorious effects wrought by the Most Adorable

Sacrament of the Altar in a soul truly filled with its love, and in a body continually consecrated by its celestially refining and transfiguring presence. Saint Stanislaus Kostka, in his few, brief earthly hours, has left the imperishable memorial of an entire being in the exalted, ecstatic purity and beauty of this heavenly means; for his soul mirrored brightly what the Savior effects, even in life's lowly pathway, if the soul be but loving and true; and his beautiful, sanctified body ever seemed less of this earth than of heaven. The idea, therefore, of Stanislaus lent itself prompt to the pondering mind in the thought here intended; since, as already observed, the one greatest act of his virtue was a literal journey through earth's lonely scenes, through hundreds of wearying leagues of an alien's long exile, but sustained in a most wonderful manner by Communions brought from on high; a journey thus prefiguring clearly, in its

toil and its pain, each soul's lonely path; and showing, even more fully, by the fairest example, what the Savior designs as its heavenly solace and strength.

It has, therefore, seemed well to invoke these more sweetly irresistible charms in preference to even the strictest, most unanswerable logic in support of the same lofty theme; and to choose this marvelous life of a saint as a more natural form of expression for all we could ever hope to aver in relation with thoughts whose intrinsic deep beauty makes their merest utterance difficult, if not wholly in vain; and which therefore requires example's most eloquent aid; setting forth, as we do, each gently fair incident as a phase of high grace that words could but faintly depict. And, were any still further vindication demanded, it could surely be found in the fact that this beautiful saint seems to stand, in the fullest of justice, as the one bright heavenly herald whose voice should give life to these words that

have owed their very existence to the most sacred emotions thus welling unforced to the heart at the thought of his gentlest of souls.

The courteous reader is, therefore, to be invited, if so be his tastes inclined, to forget the present, in favor of a time long since passed away. He is asked to leave, in spirit, his present, actual surroundings far behind; in order to travel, in the same mystic manner, through scenes very different and very far removed from these; in climes and amidst circumstances having but little in common with our own. He is requested to roll back the heavily clinging pages of human history, until they grow foully red again with the clotted life-blood of Central Europe in the latter half of the sixteenth cycle of our own momentous era. For it is in the older hemisphere that our story lies, and in a time of deadliest strife; for what can more keenly whet the pitiless sword, or nerve to greater cruelty the quivering

arm that wields it, than the hell-born hates that always spring full-formed and accursedly immortal from even the very first throes of that blind, diabolical fury which we so strangely call religious wars? Frenzied doctrinal revolt—which some have called Reform—stalked those fair lands in those dread days, its eyes aflame, its red hands still uplifted, and its maddened cries ever resounding anew with fiendish triumph through the blackened and smouldering ruins hourly added to the wide devastation which it had already wrought over once peaceful cities and once verdant plains; its exulting shrieks rising to ever greater and greater fury, as it glanced, with burning eye, upon the still more bitter and more finally hopeless desolation of unnaturally ruptured families and of hostile though kindred hearts which everywhere followed its ruthless track of blood and fire, leaving upon all an enduring blight such as no savage horde could ever hope to equal in even the most

appalling ravages of its wild, ungovernable career.

Yes, to the very heart of Europe we must go; to where the purely sparkling head-waters of the Danube make the first querulous, diffident essays of their wondrous way, within the deep and cooling shadows of that great Forest so long sung and storied by wandering bard and stately chronicler in the most romantic accents of the great world's life. We must stand by the softly-palpitating silver stream, and note each faint, unconscious ripple, as heedless as unsullied, which marks each bright, unthought advance in the stately, majestic coursing which awaits it, on its way to the great central sea. And we must pass beyond the fretful fountains of the river. We must follow its swelling yet still untarnished tide, and trace its softly-limpid branches to where they, too, were born; and whence they, flashing, leap from the frowning brow of that wide Bavarian plateau which forms the last

stern protest of the mighty Alps, as they sullenly sink to the German plain from their imperial Helvetian splendor. And we must traverse those historic lands. We must seek a gloriously,—and also, alas! a sadly,—famed city of the olden time; a city glorious with the splendid, imperishable memorials of its ancient Roman foundation, and its early Christian Bishopric continued for ages in beauty and power; sad, through its baleful prominence in the sordidly carnal revolt which so rudely threw back the gnomon of time, and, at a single stroke, rendered one-half of Europe hopelessly commonplace. For we must pass by forest and river and plain, in search of a gentle pilgrim who once stood here, and who must have wept, even more bitterly than we now weep, over the cruel double desolation which stretched so far at his feet. Even here, our journey shall not be completed; for, after we shall have gazed for a time upon the city's stately towers, funereal witnesses

of a greatness that is gone; after thinking of all that they once signified and all they now deplore,—of centuries of mystic cathedral chants, of heaven-ascending clouds of fragrant beauty, and of the incomparably softer and sweeter incense of pure hearts inflamed with ecstatic ardors from thousands of ineffably Holy Communions; and, also, after thinking, alas! of present bleak hearts and of shamefully corrupted lives—after all this, we must turn away. For we shall find that our youthful refugee, not finding here what his love so eagerly sought, and not being able to bear even the slightest delay that would hold him from the object of a heaven-imposed task, as well as from the fulfilment of his own long cherished hope, has already resumed his painful journey. His weary feet, not finding where they might rest, did but touch these noisy ways, ere he again set forth, to seek the swift realization of his burning desires, and to satiate the devoted longings

which for years had torn his seraphically fervent soul. Thus, in a measure, we shall have shared his own disappointment, and so must share his further toil; since it is he whom we have sought, and whom we have failed to find. Yet, it is an untold privilege even to have stood where he has been, and we reck not our seemingly fruitless labor; for we wish to learn some of his heart's deepest lessons to-night, and none save those who have suffered can know a sufferer's soul. We still must follow those slender footsteps, which lead once more by the stealing streamlet's side, as it glides more softly onward, through calmer hills, as we turn once more to the blue rolling Danube's waters, which now, for the first time, seem to feel something of the imposing grandeur and deep exultation of the mighty course upon which they so lightly entered. The passers-by tell us of a gentle youth with alternately downcast and upward-gazing eyes who has bent his footsteps to a peaceful town

beyond the glistening waters. We feel that they thus speak of him whom we are seeking, and our eager gaze at once bridges the river to where the more modest domes of the humbler city rise on the farther bank of the storied stream. How little they know that they are blessed beyond measure to-night, in the sacred possession of one of earth's few angels!

VI. EVENING

*“Et cum vespera facta
esset egrediebatur de civi-
tate.”*

AND yet, before taking our own departure, we still pause, for a time, held by some irresistible impulse; though the sun is fast sinking to its gorgeous decline in the west, and the shadows are falling where our footsteps must go. A lonely, half-unconscious, half-despairing sigh trembles upon our quivering lips, as the

¹ “And when evening was come, he went forth out of the city.”—Mark xi. 19.

supremely significant vistas that seek the gleaming distance so far from our yearning gaze are softly veiled by evening's first, delicate film; while the slowly gathering darkness, linked with the ever deepening silence, so sadly suggests the final night that is not very far from any soul. Yet still we linger, still despite the haste that would urge us on; for the thrall of the scene is passing strong upon us; and, as we thus stand above the granitic Alpine bases which we know to lie in eternal lethargy so far below us,—though not more low nor more lethargic than lie the fairest hopes and fairest aspirations of these now stricken lands—profoundest thoughts of many things that were, and are, and are, perhaps, to be, crowd in ghostly array upon us; and saddened History seems to emerge from the gathering night upon the gloomy mountain-side, and to weep over these heedless cities; strangely like to another and greater Mourner long ago, who wept over a still more ancient

city in the still more distant past; and, the shadowy Presence slowly seems, alas! and again like Him, to trace, with drooping finger, an incomparably greater desolation still to come.

Touched by the fading vision, our own deep thoughts grow deeper still, and their first sad reveries return. The solemn sounds of deep-toned minsters seem to struggle faintly to us from the centuries that are gone. Again, great organs softly breathe the sacred sweetness of their shadowy breasts, and once more the twinkling tapers gleam through the silent altar's perfumed mist. The Pure Oblation is offered again in many a faintly echoing cathedral, and youth and age once more receive the only Support that can sustain either. Surpliced acolytes at length precede the venerable priest, as he once more falters to the sacristy, his locks of snow less white than his pure and stainless heart. The adoring thousands

seem to rise from their knees before our very eyes, and to return to the simple yet sanctified joys of innocent, happy homes. And again, alas! a searing curse settles fatally over all, and a cold gray mist blots all the sacred beauty of the mystic scene. The solemn tollings are silent. The organ's voice has ceased, and an ominous calm forebodes the coming woe. Suddenly, the darkened scene flashes brilliant again, indeed; for dread lines of lurid light and bursts of leaping flame fiercely cleave the silent pall that had chilled our thought; and their message is of terror, not of joy. They mark, indeed, God's temple; but not the worship of His name. They rise from His holy altar, but only to show where its scattered ruins lie; and the sinister clouds that roll heavily from their pathway mark man's lowering hatred, not the mounting incense of his prayer. Bright gleams ascend, indeed, from many humble, hidden homes; but their play is far too fierce for the fire-

side's innocent mirth. They rise from mountain and river and plain, but theirs is not the calm cheer of some simple common rejoicing; for they do but light the doom of hundreds of unhappy hamlets swiftly devoted to ruin, amidst the maddest orgies of unbridled religious ferocity. Men have rebelled against supernatural truth and against divinely imposed authority, and the nations flame with the insatiable fires that unholy passion has kindled.

Oppressed and faint we stand, until startled again from our sad contemplation by the sun half dipped in what we know to be, despite their hopeless distance from our envious gaze, the ever rolling surges of the great Atlantic tides; and we turn with untold sorrow to the parting splendor, so mournfully, yet gloriously, typical of what these lands once were, and of what they might have been; and also, alas! of what they now are, when the colorless sky has become everywhere sombre,

and the day's bright beauty is gone; when the eventless gray mists of the night adapt themselves fully to the soulless routine of nothingness and of unrelieved earthiness which now degrades these anciently glorious realms; and which, in once noble nations, as in once honored men, has ever formed the dread, but fitting, penalty of the soul's revolt against its Maker, of its pitiful abandonment of the pure Manna of Heaven, and its fatal return to the corrupted and corrupting grossness of its debased primal captivity. And still we stand and still we gaze, in saddest recollection and most ominous foreboding, until many of night's most sacred hours have been solemnly tolled away, above a sleeping continent's once peacefully holy and regally beautiful, but now coarsely deformed, disfigured, and degraded, face. And we have paused here so long, kind reader, because we have thought, and have spoken, of journeys, and of strength for the traveler's way; and we know that the nations

have fallen, because, in their path through the ages, they have not taken their food; because they knew not their Guide and Consoler, because they have forgotten 'Him, who alone could have sustained them in life's ever perilous way. They are dead, because they have sought to live without the Viaticum of Life. They are commonplace, because, in its absence, all their heavenly inspiration is gone. And their celestial Viaticum has not come to their aid, because it has been so coldly rejected and with full knowledge refused. Sadness, almost without hope, seizes upon our souls; but the nations, as ever, do but sit down to eat and to drink, and rise up, as of old, only to play.¹

¹ Exod. xxxii. 6.

VII. A MIDNIGHT JOURNEY

“Et lucerna ejus est Agnus.”¹

BUT we can rest no longer here. We must set forth at last, on our long, unguided journey, though now it is darkest night. We must leave the fated city, and seek the not less deeply desolate town; fortunate, indeed, if we shall not wander far from our way, nor fall a prey to the lurking foes of these almost mediæval pathways. For we must not forget that we have gone back to the olden years; to

¹ “And the Lamb is the lamp thereof.”—Apoc. xxi. 23.

a time when, if the kindly-hearted were kindly-hearted, indeed; the evil-minded were consistent, too; and showed but little mercy to the lonely wayfarer whom chance or design betrayed to their lurking power. And even if, appalled by the night's now impenetrable gloom, and by the heavily silent darkness, which as yet yields not the slightest sound of the river's winding course, we feel that our hearts are sinking, and remember that we have traveled far to-day,—still, we must advance. We could not recoil, even though certain that dark perils awaited us; for the scene of our hope must be no longer deferred, and deep sacrifice is ever the price of high heavenly favors. Nor should we inconsiderately despond too completely as yet, since it may even be that our path will be incomparably more holy and more beautiful now, in the deep, silent hours that throne the mountain's midnight. Those gentle feet have gone before. Surely, we can follow.

In very truth, we have no need to fear. We are to have mystic aid to-night. Our task is not of earthly interest or ostentation. We seek the knowledge of a holy life and of the deep Viaticum that can make it so. Our only wish and our only hope is to see God's fairest work with man, to mark His love in a chosen soul, to trace the footsteps of one whom Mary has loved with a very special love. Surely, we may hope that our reverent tread amidst scenes so holy will not be altogether devoid of divine protection. Our minds shall pierce night's deepest folds, and force them to yield us a most precious secret, guard it as they may. Our very pathway, too, it even seems, is to be rendered sure and certain; for we notice that here, just as we leave the ancient city's gate, God's work already seems to have begun. We seem to see faint traces of the very footsteps we have come to seek. We all have read of an ardent saint, the wealth of whose charity

caused even the frozen ground he trod to glow; and we all know that the gentle mystic of Avellino illumined even the densest darkness of night by his sacred presence. We remember, too, that the rays of heaven full often flashed bright from the face of our own fair saint; and to-night he seems to have left faint gleams of silvery radiance wherever his saintly feet have fallen. We think of the mysterious words of the Lord in the Gospel,¹ in which nature and grace seem reversed, and the bright body becomes the guide and the light of the soul. It may be that we are dreaming, or that sense, overwrought, is deceived; but still, God's arm is never weakened, and it may also be that heaven is helping our love. For us, each trace surely seems to lie on the darkened road; they lead where we would go, and already they tell us much of him who left them there.

They are those of a youth, and of feet

¹ Luke xi. 36.

that were all unprotected; for, though cruelly roughened by travel, they are slender and hesitating—perhaps he feared, as we were fearing, since he set out only a few hours before; and he, like ourselves, was turned to the Danube's waters—and their partially irregular outlines tell of many a weary league's patient, persevering endeavor. Yet they but lightly touched the cold, irresponsive ground; for an indefinable trace of gentility marks them more surely than aught else that we note; and we hasten more eagerly forward, feeling, in a vague, unreasoning manner, that thus we soon shall find a graceful, princely youth; one whom we shall greatly love, and who will love us, with a gentle, shrinking respect and affection.

And at length, on, on, into the night we are going; sometimes by the lowly peasant's cottage, with only the prowling watch-dog's surly, inquiring growl to greet us; sometimes through long arch-

ways of dimly outlined trees, like the shadowy midnight nave of some great Gothic cathedral from which choristers and adorers alike were gone; a lone star gleaming above, at times, as the only reminder of the altar's myriad lights, and only the new-found murmur of the unseen brook, to replace the mighty organ's triumphantly swelling tones. For leagues and leagues, we thus but sink more deeply and still more deep into the night's mysterious gloom; the fitful rustle of the sleeping trees only seeming to increase the weird loneliness of the solitary night-bird's piercing cry. Yet still the wondrous, almost bright, footsteps seem to lead us undoubtingly on; until we begin to question whether, indeed, we are not rather following some forgetful angel's brief earthly pathway, and to fear that its mistaken footsteps must soon cease, as it takes its more natural pathway to its heavenly home; leaving us with only a sadly accented and emphasized sense of our own

utter insignificance and weakness. We feel at last that perhaps we shall never be really rewarded by being permitted to see the bright, unearthly being who thus went forth into the night, and seems forever to allure, and yet forever to elude us. Still, even in the growing apprehension that all this may prove most sadly true, not all our thoughts are those of despair; for our minds, even more than our bodies, have also traveled far, very far, to-night, in the midst of these darkened mountain scenes; far, far beyond the littleness of earth's even secular turmoils; far, far beyond man's daily sin; and our souls have thus learned highest truths from heaven, here, in this silent, voiceless sanctuary of earth's deepest and holiest night.

VIII. IN THE DARKNESS

*“Quis est iste qui venit de
Edom, tinctis vestibus de
Bosra?”¹*

BUT these partially sad forebodings at length give place to a brighter hope, and it seems that we shall ere long be blessed with what we have come to regard as a heavenly vision; for the mystic foot-prints gleam clearer and brighter now, and it would even seem that they received their gentle imprint only a few moments ago.

¹ “Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bosra?”—Is. lxiii. 1.

They lead up the hill, then aside from the path; and our hearts throb deeply as we seem to be so very near their maker. Yet,—alas for all earthly hope!—we lose his loved presence again, almost in despair, within the first fringes of a silent, gloomy wood, whose dark and heavy mold was much more kind to him than to us; since it sank soft beneath his weary and wounded feet, but refused to hold their impress for our gaze. The city's storied towers are far away. The Danube town must be more distant still, since we cannot hear as yet the heavy roll of the river's now insistent waters. Evidently, our pilgrim has turned aside; and we know not whether he has bent his own disappointed footsteps. With a feeling of irreparable loss, we return to the last faint prints on the sterner road; and as we veil our anxious eyes, even in the midnight's hopeless gloom, and test the yielding mold again, something more than the dews of the night moistens our cold and quivering

cheeks. We feel, with most remorseful sorrow, that we tarried, indeed, too long near the city; and that we have lost much, very much, to-night.

Cruelly saddened in heart by our fruitless search, we enter once more within the hushed and silent wood; and slowly try, yet all in vain, to disclose at least some guiding trace of disturbance, in its darkened and intricate windings; when, all at once, at the edge of an opening which we seem to have entered amongst the trees, every movement is instantly arrested, by what seems a gentle sigh. We listen breathlessly for a moment, and every doubt is dispelled. A light, rhythmic breathing tells us that we have found the object of our search. Transfixed we stand, while the soft cadence of a gently undulating breast blends with the scarce moving midnight breeze. The moment seems too blest for earth, as we think of what lies resting under the shadows there. His breathing is so light that we dare not

move, through fear of marring his so sorely needed repose. We feel that this must be our youthful saint, and the mind involuntarily flashes back to far Vienna, and along our own lonely path in his footsteps; while tears flow all unbidden, as we think of what this wearied slumber means. We mark each lightly murmured breathing, and instinctively turn our gaze to the darkened heavens for a reason they seem at first to refuse of the sorrow forgotten for a moment here. Yet, "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution,"¹ we remember; and we know that the slender, exhausted frame that is lying there in the silent night is but another proof of the lamentably humiliating truth announced in these inspired words. We rapidly retrace the gentle sleeper's saddening story, and seek in vain a cause that might palliate, in some degree, the persistent cruelty that has urged him through all his weary way, and that has

¹ 2 Tim. iii. 12.

stretched him here, a victim of innocent suffering, to-night. We think of all the toils and perils that lie suspended in this midnight rest, and of the human harshness that has been their unrelenting cause; and yet, not all their cause; for we feel the very presence of that strangely tender love divine which has had its own deep part in prostrating this frail and delicate form here, in the lonely darkness, upon the chill mountain-side; and something of a heavenly ecstasy of humblest submission to divine decrees and of fondest admiration and affection for the present gentle victim of purest returning love, takes unresisted possession of our own deeply awed yet enraptured souls. We think of that wondrous web of continuous suffering into which God ever weaves all the golden glory destined for His favored saints; and all our own toil seems as nothing, in this inspired moment, in which the very heavens seem to have descended upon earth, at the suffering side of one whose

only desire is to do his Heavenly Father's will.

Yet, even higher happinesses are now to become our own; for it would seem that the infinite treasures of divine grace and beauty from which we have already been so highly favored to-night, admit of no limit or pause. While still entranced in the first raptures of being so near to this glorious saint, another and higher transport steals over our delighted surprise, as those soft, unconscious breathings take fairest form, in words of sweetest piety, and fondly escape from the lonely sleeper's sacred lips. Holy names, names of heaven, of Jesus and of Mary, are gently murmured in the still night air; for the impetuous love of that glorious heart but ill can brook dull sleep's repressive bonds, and instinctively forces even each deeply wearied sense to formulate its high demands. Some delicate phrase of most ardent love abruptly broken by another more beautiful still, seems to be the ami-

able, and only remaining, token of weary nature's partial, protesting reign. We can only stand, bowed in deepest veneration, while these beauteous sacred accents follow one upon another in the stillness of the night. In eager thought, we follow them to the heaven whence they came; and we strive to picture, in some weak, imperfect way, their deep effect upon the mighty, loving heart of God, and within the tender, maternal breast of Mary; knowing well that we must fail, yet finding a flood of heavenly beauty in the loss of our fond attempt. We know, at least, that heaven itself bends lower at each inflamed appeal; that Mary forms new thoughts of love each time he breathes her name; and that, each moment, brighter glories gleam within the depths of that pure soul. We even seem to have entered at last within at least the first sacred courts of a saint's high communion with God; and we know not how long we have felt its ineffable charm; yet we rise, as in pain, from our

wearied and trembling knees, upon which we had all unconsciously fallen; as though we had heard some such words as those of the Lord to Moses, “The place whereon thou standest is holy ground.”¹

¹ Exod. iii. 5.

IX. A LIGHT FROM HEAVEN

*“Quis est . . . iste
formosus?”¹*

BUT higher and higher still, mounts the tide of heavenly goodness; for not even yet is God's kindness exhausted, nor yet His omnipotent power restrained. We are but trying to frame some proper return for His kind condescension in granting such favors as these; when He, from His infinite treasures, brings others even to us. For now, a strange new radiance comes to illumine these moments already

¹ “Who is . . . this beautiful one?”—Is. lxiii. 1.

entrancingly blest; as if even heaven itself had been feeling that its own exalted, supernal beauty, so deeply mirrored here, should be more fully known. Involuntarily turning to the source of the softly stealing silvery light, we see that the clouds are rolling far, to break upon some distant mountain's lonely crest, while the pure moon begins to flood down to earth the full calm wealth of her cold white heavenly beauty—so like to that of the stainless soul which it seeks to reveal—and, overjoyed, we turn again to the sleeping form, and all our fondest hopes are fully blessed.

For there, on the breast of a rugged knoll, where the trees had deployed their serried ranks for a time, as if to yield him an unbroken view of his own beloved heaven, his head resting at the foot of a rude cross evidently formed from withered branches by his own childish hands, lies Stanislaus, the beauteous object of our long-yearning love, the hope of our mystic

journey, the reason for our silent midnight search, the eager pilgrim sinking at last, and reluctantly yielding to his wearied limbs a few of the deeper hours of the dangerous night. How fully he verifies all our vague, yet exalted, anticipations; anticipations now seem to have been most wondrously and most accurately true. For he is, indeed, a beautiful and a gentle youth. High intelligence is unmistakably stamped upon his lofty brow, and heaven's own purity follows and sanctifies every line of his graceful countenance. He seems so beauteous, so gentle, so refined! And oh! so young, to be here alone, and to be so sorely tried! Scarce seventeen, and with a mold of form which denies every thought of even early manhood, he seems far too youthful and too good thus to lie, an outcast in a world he has never wronged. His marble brow, outrivaling all the silver splendors of the night, is gemmed, as it lies all unprotected, with the same soft pearls that

lie distilled upon the delicate petals of the wild rose that droops above his weary head; and the wandering mountain breezes caress the long dark locks, spared only by the precipitancy of his flight, which tell of high patrician origin, and do so much to pardon the swelling pride of a stern warrior father's heart and his stormy grief at the thought of losing so glorious a son. Ere long, those childish tresses, too, will have been sundered and cast aside, as belonging too fully to the world from which he fled; and as forming the only remaining sign of the noble lineage which that same vain world would so highly prize. For his garb is passing poor, and its texture light, indeed; though even the summer night is cold, in these open upper lands; and the leaves on which he lies are dank and chill. Yet, so fair and delicate the form, that even this mendicant raiment cannot veil the undoubted nobility of its owner, by whom it

is unavoidably borne with all a prince's grace.

And the poor, slight feet are bare; those gentle feet, that still have led us on so swiftly and so far! They seem like marble, beneath the moon, save where strange crimson stains startle our tearful gaze. Toil and hardship through hundreds of miles of weary road and rugged pass have robbed them, in some degree, of their native gracefulness and beauty. They lie disfigured in places, and the bright blood gleams here and there, like lost and broken rubies, from their only covering, the fortunate dust of his sanctified pathways. As we tenderly gaze upon them, we remember the almost panting words of Isaias, which here find a touching and really literal application, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, and that preacheth peace!"¹ for these poor mem-

¹ Is. lii. 7.

bers lie, indeed, upon the mountain, and no one has ever preached peace more eloquently than that gentle, almost inanimate, form. We remember, and almost add with David, "We will adore in the place where his feet stood";¹ for we know that heaven guides and guards their every movement. Slight marvel, if their delicate molding has not answered all the stern demands of the long, cruel way; for they are slender, indeed; and they have pressed many a rude pathway, even from far Vienna. They have fled from a brother's cruelty and from a father's wrath, and they still are seeking the fulfilment of a high command imposed by heaven. They were fair and faultless once, but that was far away, in the still earlier youth of his own far distant, and forever relinquished, castle home. A cruel world has marred their gentle beauty, and they, like our own poor weakness, shall gleam faultless again only in

¹ Ps. cxxxii. 7.

heaven. We once again remember those strangely beautiful stories that, as we walked along, and asked an occasional passer-by, the country-folk had told us of a youthful prince who seemingly wished to forget his proud earthly lineage; and who, fleeing from some far-off city hundreds of miles away, had been seen at times moving swiftly, yet silently, along the more secret pathways when he could, and on the broad highways, only when he must; and who, they thought, could not now be far distant from the ancient city we had left. The fairest visions rise before us now of this gentle youth passing, as the angel of the Incarnation might have done, so swiftly, yet so still, on his eager way; and we feel that this gently slumbering youth is no other than the princely fugitive of the peasant's tale, that his is the form before us.

Reverently, yet irresistibly, we draw nearer; as, ever and anon, an angelic smile softly steals across those placid

features, and some gentlest word of habitual, unconscious piety still escapes from his delicate lips. Pressed closely to his heart, he is holding something, which thus remains unknown, until one of slumber's listless movements reveals, for a moment, in the pure light of the moon, a beautiful image of Mary; but only to return it at once, and with equal unconsciousness, to its endeared accustomed place. We instantly recall the fact that one of his most frequently murmured names was that of the great Queen of Heaven, and thus one of his deepest loves and one of his fondest secrets is all our own; and we know that we now possess the full reason and cause of his wondrously angelic purity of manner and of mien. That beloved image, moreover, as it lies closely pressed to the lonely sleeper's heart, renders certain our own long cherished hope, by showing that we thus have found the princely form and the stainless soul of the angelic Stanislaus Kostka; while all

the doubts and all the fatigues of our own strange journey are forgotten, and only its charms remain; as, in a maze of exultant admiration and affection, we seem to wreath him fondly round with all the beauty and the majesty of the rippling waters and the frowning hills.

X. THE PILGRIM'S COUCH

*"Vestitus erat veste aspersa sanguine."*¹

THIS is he, the sweetness of whose memory has filled the centuries through which we have seemed to pass to-night. His the thought that has been our inspiration. It is for him that we have come, and for whom other minds, in other centuries, will repeat the ghostly pilgrimage that we have just made with so much of eagerness and holy expectation; since

¹ "He was clothed with a garment sprinkled with blood."—Apoc. xix. 13.

noblest moral beauty will ever hold compelling charms for each more thoughtful soul, and God has meant this glorious youth to live from age to age; to gleam, not only in the secret hearts of such as yearn to love as he has loved; but also in the whole vast world as well.

But now his cruel wounds are taking on a strangely brighter tinge under the more loftily rising moon; and, "Why then is thy apparel red, and thy garments like those that tread in the wine-press?"¹ we cry, with Isaias, as we tearfully look upon that weary form and those feet incarnadine; while, with an equal wealth of sacred significance and suggestiveness, comes the instant, unbidden answer, "I have trodden the wine-press alone, and of the nations there is not a man with me."² For indeed, this gentle pilgrim, in his own beautiful measure, deserves these sacred words devoted by the Church to the bit-

¹ Is. lxiii. 2.

² Ibid., lxiii. 3.

ter passion of the Savior he so fondly loved and so faithfully imitated. He has, indeed, in his own sanctified person, trodden sorrow's dark pathways alone. Excepting the angels, he has passed through these hundreds and hundreds of miles, in solitary loneliness; and he is still alone, and still suffering, on these chill mountain heights. Verily, suffering was the refinement exemplified by the Master, and verily, sorrow indeed must be our own; if even innocence like to this can thus be allowed by heaven to feel its most cruel pangs. Man has been merciless to this gentle youth without reserve. God has seemed to be harsh, but love was behind the veil; and the gentle eyes now closed in still slumber there have but gleamed with fonder returning love, even through the fast welling, uncontrollable tears of each repeated, divinely chastening blow.

And such, dear reader, is the picture, lit by the midnight moon, that you have

been asked to contemplate. We have overtaken our weary pilgrim in one of the brief truces of his arduous way; and it may be well for us, also, to pause, like him, for a moment here, despite the impetuous course of our eager pre-occupied thought; the more fully to ponder the deep lessons of life in this sacred place, at the side of a gentle, beauteous saint, in the wondrously glorious vision of this privileged night. Thus far, we have not, it is true, been allowed to witness his miraculous Holy Communions; but God may be kind, ere the journey is over; and may bless us, even in this. Yet, though deprived of all further concession, we could not but perfect this most beautiful scene; for we know that those lips have full often been touched by the hand of an angel, and by the angels' God. More than once, ere he left his sad home, and more than once on the perilous way, have the angels, and the Bread of the Angels, strengthened his faltering soul; and we

know that this heavenly food is the real and the only support of his marvelous life and power. Ah, yes! his every outward act is but the external expression of his gently beautiful soul; and could we but penetrate that now unconscious bosom, we should find that the thought of his Savior, and of his sacramental God, was its very being and life, the very light of the splendid, beauteous heaven already existing there. Nothing of this mere earth can enter where sanctity's perfect beauty resides; and each new act of this so sacred life is only another reflection of God's own, all-perfect, inexhaustible loveliness mirrored within the purest and fairest of souls. It is true that our beauteous saint has thus far but touched the earth lightly; and some there may be who would wish to await the sterner proofs of sterner years; yet we shall find his heart's deep virtue most exquisite, even now; and we must remember that his earthly impress shall never be

much deeper, and that even his present slight contact is soon to cease; since this glorious youth is far too gently fair to be much longer with us here, in this cold, unworthy world. He is now beyond his sixteenth year. He shall never close the eighteenth. God wants him at home in heaven. Mary is calling him to her side. The angels miss their kindred spirit, and eagerly await his return. He has lived a very long time, indeed, if we but number the sad beats of his exiled heart, or chronicle the incessant sighs of his heaven-yearning soul. And now, as never before, he himself is longing most ardently to go. He yearns for his Savior's and his Mother's side. Indeed, every act of his earthly life, from its very beginning, has looked steadily to its hastening close. This world, for him, has only meant the preparation for another; and should we go back to his life's early hours, and follow its brief but arduous course, we should find the ample

reason for much that is lying here, as well as for his seraphic soul's now burning demand for eternal liberation. "Being made perfect in a short space, he fulfilled a long time";¹ and we can readily appreciate what we might call God's almost human motives outlined in the simple words, "For his soul pleased God, therefore He hastened to bring him out of the midst of iniquities."² It is true that his time has not yet come, but he feels its rapid approach; and for the trying intervening interval, he is waiting here, only as a page who still must obey his queen's behest, as a faithful child who hears a mother's call, as a loyal soldier who flinches not at his general's deep-testing command. Mary has told him he must enter the society named for her Son, and all these weary leagues do but form an unbroken chain of devoted acts, loyal to her will. The storied city he had sought could not

¹ Wis. iv. 13.

² Ibid., iv. 14.

fulfil his vow; for the saintly Canisius, whom God in His faultless providence had destined to meet the holy youth—only a saint can understand a saint—has gone to the river town, and thither this generous child is speeding; pausing here, only because the night is safer in the silent wood. Let him rest deep in the peace of his holy repose; whilst we earnestly study, in this strange, supernatural scene, clothed round with all the calm majesty of intensest night, the deep lessons of which we all stand so much in need, but which so few are fitted to teach!

XI. PEACE THROUGH SUFFERING

*“Non quomodo mundus
dat, ego do vobis.”¹*

WE know that he entered the active outer world all pure and bright, fully loving and trusting everybody, and thinking that everybody would love and trust him; but we also know that his young and generous heart, though daily advancing in each most noble charm, was soon chilled by universal harshness, and cruelty, and sin. Those gentle eyes now

¹ “Not as the world giveth do I give.”—John xiv. 27.

closed in holy, child-like sleep have met no kind returning glance for many weary years. Those small, slight ears now softly lulled, not less by Mary's loving lips than by the whispering night-wind's murmur, have heard no earthly sound so sweet, since childhood's early hours; for bitterest blame and cold reproach have long been their only heritage. The sweet, sad pleadings of those now softly murmuring lips have earned no other answer than coarsest imprecation. That gentle side, rising and falling so peacefully now, has full oft been spurned by a brother's cruel foot; and that cheek so white and wan has borne, like the Master's, the livid imprint of a ruthless, impious hand. Truly, he has trodden the wine-press alone, with none, save God or Mary, to console; for, excepting God and the angels, all these bitter sufferings have ever remained concealed and unknown, and without even a thought of complaint or redress, while this final escape from

these dark sorrows has only meant the infliction of others still more deep. These hundreds of miles of painful flight have formed his only relief; and they have but stretched him here, alone, on the chill mountain-side where he is lying cold and trembling now. Even here, grief has only been added unto grief; and his ever solicitous and thoughtful mind is suffering much more than even his delicate, sensitive body; for his unselfish soul keenly pictures all that his loved ones are suffering, and his heart bleeds deep for their sake, though he knows that they weep without prayer. He has left one home, but has not found another; and he knows not how long God's design may refuse him where to lay his anxious head. He knows that he has suffered unjustly, yet he flees in terror from the insistent thought; and his greatest pang would be the slightest movement of resentment or revenge. His one constant yearning is to love and be loved, yet he can find no

earthly object on which justly to lavish the pure deep gold of his heart's ardent affection. And Jesus and Mary seem so far away!

Yes, in his regard, as in that of every other, trial was the inexorable price of high Christian perfection; and it was in these bitter sorrows that his young heart and brave soul grew strong. The deepest of suffering has given to the sweet, soft piety of his earlier childhood a temper and a strength that now can be utterly inflexible and austere. He is still the very soul of all that is childishly and innocently guileless, of all that is kind and thoughtful; but he is also something more. The still white gleam that now leaps from the depths of his stainless soul is the flash of the sternest steel, not merely the soft, milk-white radiance of its first, yielding, snow-like beauty. It is not less fair, but it is more noble, than any less deeply tested piety could be. Unconsciously, our minds again revert to the Scripture, and

in our thought we seem to hear the angel speaking, as he says, "Because thou wast acceptable to God, it was necessary that temptation should prove thee."¹ And the test has indeed been deep, and has been full nobly borne. Its only effect has been, as heaven intended, to urge that generous soul to ever greater and greater sacrifice for God. This present midnight scene is only a moment's pause in a long series of acts reaching the highest ascetic heroism; for, as we all know, this noble soul is thus fleeing from a parent's love, from wealth and station and power, from all that this world holds dear; and is thus thrusting aside all the treasures of earth, only in order to follow its crucified God, only in order to give its all to Him who gave His all for us. And this total consecration of years which for him are mature, is but the natural, and at the same time supernatural, culmination and crown of spotless early years, of an intrepid,

¹ Tob. xii. 13.

generous youth, of thoughtful, pious school-days, and of steadily faithful increasing years; of unalterable patience under the most galling forms of domestic tutelage, of constant, silent prayer, of love for the still and shadowy church and for the lonely Prisoner of the Tabernacle, of tenderest affection for Mary, and of a life wholly lived for God alone.

Nor, though all the toils of that long and lonely pathway now rest on those weary limbs and feet, is his arduous task yet done. This is not the only wood that must shelter him; for he has still far, very far, to go. His sacrifice is not yet complete. The victim of love divine is not yet wholly consumed by its ardors. Suffering must still further test and refine the pure gold that is gleaming here. Not all these further trials, it is true, now stand out clear and well defined before his willing mind; yet he has a saint's deep pre-science, and he looks to the future for sorrow rather than for joy.

Yet, if this lofty life is to be fully known, it must be remembered that, notwithstanding all this certain and uncertain sorrow, he is at peace, he is supremely happy, with God's own exalted happiness. Earth knows no other more deeply blessed. He has always remembered that, "Whom the Lord loveth, he chastiseth,"¹ as well as the Apocalyptic oracle, "Such as I love, I rebuke and chastise";² and for him, these constant sufferings have only been so many undoubted pledges of that glorious love divine which could not but claim and secure the most generous, unquestioning ardors of his own returning affection. He has heard the beautiful, consoling words, "My peace I give unto you," but he has also marked their significantly warning conclusion, "Not as the world giveth, do I give."³ He remembers, too, that even after the bright Resurrection, when Christ again said to the disciples,

¹ Heb. xii. 6.

² Apoc. iii. 19.

³ John xiv. 27.

“Peace be with you,” He also at once, as if showing the foundations of heaven’s deep peace, showed them the wounds of His hands and His side.¹ Stanislaus knows that his Savior’s peace was a peace borne through a life of sorrow to a death of shame; and he knows that he is not better than his Master. He does not, therefore, look for, nor desire, the only peace which this coarse world can give, the base, ignoble peace of carnal earthly ease. Indeed, he counts not, he scarcely feels, the passing trials of earth; for his heart is beating high in heaven, with his kindred angels and saints. His conversation is truly and constantly there, and his thoughts are so little of earth that even here below, his Guardian Angel often walks openly and visibly at his innocent side, speaking with him on terms of almost equal intimacy; as if both were either of sanctified flesh and blood, or both

¹ John xx. 20.

were already the bright inhabitants of heaven, in some strange manner strayed to our common earth.

Calmly he sleepeth now, indeed; yet not even in his slumber can his ardent soul forget all the beauty and the tenderness that fill his waking hours with the fondest love of God. Would his deep humility permit, he could truly say, in the words of the Canticle, "I sleep, and my heart watcheth."¹ His slumber is more like the soft closing of sense to earthly things, in order to gaze more fully and more uninterruptedy upon the very Beatific Vision Itself. We ourselves but just now have heard his many murmured protestations of sweetest and purest affection. And still he breathes these words of love, as still he slumbers on, the beads he has so often told along the weary road still twined about his long, white fingers, with the crucifix fondly pressed to the palm. And still we gaze entranced, like the shep-

¹ Can. v. 2.

herds beneath another midnight sky, so long ago, while still a deep, calm silence covers all, and the night is holding its middle course; as when, too, at that same dread hour, O God! “Thy Almighty Word leapt down from heaven from Thy royal throne.”¹ And still the cold, white moon wheels in distant curving beauty through the now widely star-gemmed heaven. And a low, unconscious moan is heard at the foot of the mountain cross!

¹ Wis. xviii. 15.

XII. THE HOLOCAUST

“Ibi offeres eum in holocaustum super unum montium, quem monstravero tibi.”¹

WE have felt, and we have said, that these false lands were most foully and most deeply blighted, and in very truth they are; but in him who is lying here, they are also most deeply blessed; for this white victim on the chill mountain-side, this spotless lamb on the earth's great

¹ “There thou shalt offer him for an holocaust upon one of the mountains which I will shew thee.”—Gen. xxii. 2.

altar to its God, this angelic soul in a frail earthly body, recalling the Divine concealed in mortal flesh, is an immaculate oblation in their behalf; and God, mayhap, some day will honor the stainless expiation. Nothing more beautiful ever rested on Europe's guilty bosom. This holy child is lying, a heavenly holocaust, in the granite arms of the mighty Alps, as if to appease the just wrath of high heaven against the deeply stained hearts that pulse so heedlessly below; and there must be some response, in time or in eternity, to his deep soul's earth-wide longings for righteousness and truth. Hearts such as his never palpitate wholly in vain, though the record full often is kept only in another world. The sight of suffering youthful beauty at Rome so long ago led, in God's ever gracefully moving providence, to the first light of the Gospel in Britain; perhaps the same suffering beauty here to-night may lead, under the same omnipotent guidance, to the im-

measurably more difficult task of its full restoration to lands in which it has once been loved and lost. For the weary form that has fallen here is one of the fairest that God has ever molded. It is that of one who is now, and has ever been, the favored child of Mary, Heaven's Queen. That mind now soothed in soft suspension there, is the habitual home of the highest and holiest thought; and that heart still throbbing heavily from its toil is the perpetual source of the purest and most lofty desire. It is stern, indeed, with high resolve; and yet is melting with every most sweet and gentle tenderness. That hand which now so reverently holds Mary's beloved image to his heart, has held to that same pure bosom—yes, even here on earth—Mary's own divine, celestial Son; under the winning guise, so fitting for him, of a beauteous infant child; and has fondled him in all the tender excesses of innocent, exuberant joy! Only in heaven, shall higher beauty greet our

gaze than that upon which we are looking now, as it lies here all our own, in the soft moonlight of the sacred midnight's mountain scene! Yes, dear reader, this is gentle, beautiful, angelic, seraphic Stanislaus Kostka; another Isaac on the mountain-side, only there is no kindly father, to strike in mercy the swiftly liberating blow. Surely, God will hear his saintly prayer and accept his willing immolation; and surely, indeed, our own long journey through the centuries, through strange lands, and through the whispering night, has not been too great a price to pay for such a high reward. But now, for a time, we must bid him a sad farewell; for, though we shall see him again, since we still shall follow in his sacred footsteps, we must leave him here now all alone for a time, on the silent hill-side, in the cold white night with God; for he will soon awake, and it were a most unpardonable intrusion, to share that heavenly soul's first greetings to its

Maker. Even now, his still unconsciously murmured prayers are for God's blessings on the day; and his resolute heart may at any moment summon even those still deeply wearied members to instant and eager action. Our privilege has already been very great. We must not profane deep mysteries too holy for our gaze.

XIII. THE AWAKENING

*"Adjuro vos . . . per
capreas cervosque campo-
rum, ne suscitetis, neque
evigilare faciatis dilec-
tam."*¹

YET, were we still to stand beside him here, near, but all unseen, we should behold an awakening fair, indeed, and holy. As the first pale light of common day began to outline and illustrate his splendid beauty, we should see the large eyes un-

¹ "I adjure you . . . by the roes and the harts of the field that you make not the beloved to awake."—Can. ii. 7.

close, and a charming child-like wonder fill their lucid depths. For he is very, very young; and yet he is far, very far, from home. It was only the other day that his heart-broken mother gave him the tearful blessing that marked his first real entrance into the outer world; and now the tall trees swaying gently high above his head against the lofty, purpling sky make him think that he must still be dreaming; and he looks inquiringly around, until, in a moment, a sweetly amused smile marks his awakening sense of still half-unconscious deception. But then, in an instant, the whole sad truth flashes full upon him, and an utter desolation overshadows his innocent, ingenuous face. With a swift flash of pain, his mind has leapt to his own far distant Poland, from which he feels that he must have walked so very, very far away. In a dull confusion of varying grief and sadness, he thinks of that saintly mother's fondest love; of her willing, yet oh! so anxious

sacrifice; of a father's violent, unreasoning affection; of a brother, heartless in a cruelty continued even through the course of this very flight; of unseen tears, of unheard supplications, of spurned and rejected entreaties. His last memory of natural ties is that of brutal neglect and ill-treatment. Heavy tears course down his blanched and wearied cheek, and his fair brow droops again in utter discouragement upon his despairingly outstretched arm. Yet nature's unguarded and turbulent reign can be but brief, indeed, and unconscious in that pure though prematurely suffering soul. A wandering sunbeam has touched the delicate rose petals above him, and it glistens and plays in the sparkling dew they bear. Instantly, the thought of the God of Beauty floods his troubled soul with sweetest peace, and strange ecstatic splendors seem to flash all about him. For, despite our own resolve, we have most imprudently tarried too long. Lost

in the lovely vision, we forgot all other things beside; and have thus unconsciously remained, and have unwillingly invaded the consecrated sanctuary of his rapturous morning prayer. It were impossible, now, to retire, without subjecting him whom we so wish to respect, to the most abashed and painful distress and confusion. We can only bow low in deepest and most reverent silence, and join our own weak prayers to his. He quickly lifts his weary frame, and kneels to offer the first homage of his heart to God. That lovely countenance is all transfigured now. A radiance from on high invests its every gentle feature, and folds him round with heaven's own celestial beauty, until the mountain fastness gleams as bright as brightest day. He signs himself with the saving cross, and this single reminder of his Savior's love is sufficient to suffuse his entire being with the deepest returning tenderness and affection. From his beautiful eyes, raised

fondly to heaven, tears again flow fast; but now from higher, purer fountains; nor feels he longer any need to check their warmly rapid coursing. Motionless we see him thus, absorbed in rapt contemplation of some invisible beauty, and speaking the voiceless language of another world; while we feel that we ourselves are forming part of scenes too holy for common men, but doubtless clear and plain, with heaven's own light, to glorious souls like his. But still we are very, very happy; for we can love, at least, what we cannot fully understand; and again, in the celestial beauty of the scene, we have forgotten all. For aught we know, a thousand years may have passed away for us, not less than for the amiable song-charmed monk of old, who far outlived his time, and returned, to find a stranger in his cell, and his own very name forgotten; all through his following, for a few brief moments, as he thought, the enchanting notes of a softly warbling little bird; and now,

we, like him, find a truer, deeper meaning in the Psalmist's inspired assertion that, with God, a thousand years are as a day that is past;¹ as also in the words of Saint Peter that, with Him, one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.² Even for us, our instant delight seems to have destroyed all sense of time; and we know now that one thought of that glorious soul contains more of life than a thousand years of sin. With Ecclesiasticus, we feel that "as a pebble of the sand, so are a few years compared to eternity";³ for time is thus seen to be an utterly useless and extraneous factor in scenes so holy as these. And he is praying while we think.

But suddenly, and with a swiftly crimsoning flush, as though conscious of some deep guilt, we see this rapt seraph start from his knees. He has doubtless thought of a duty which seems, perhaps, too long neglected, through this sweet

¹ Ps. lxxxix. 4. ² 2 Pet. iii. 8. ³ Ecclus. xviii. 8.

communion with his God. He remembers that his task is not yet done, that he must hasten to the silent monastery of the farther town; since it is there alone that he now may hope to fulfil his beloved Mother's command, by entering the Society of Jesus. While, therefore, the first long pencils of the morning light are still struggling vainly downward, to touch the gloomy mountain peaks, he anxiously scans the unwilling horizon at the point where the distant goal of his lengthened journey disappeared the night before. The wide fields and sloping hill-sides sparkling faintly white from the night's long coolness at once recalled to him that heavenly manna of the long ago, which, as the Scripture says, as "a dew lay round about the camp";¹ and which the Holy Writer further describes, by saying that "when it had covered the face of the earth, it appeared in the wilderness small, and as it were beaten with a pestle,

¹ Exod. xvi. 13.

like unto the hoar-frost on the ground.” Nothing of all this so sacredly suggestive beauty was lost upon the deeply observant eyes of Stanislaus, whose few earthward glances saw something of God in whatever they touched; and which now, in an instant ecstasy of love and affection, beheld mirrored here both the mighty Incarnation and its sweet perpetuation in the true and Heavenly Manna of the New and Eternal Dispensation. His own fond studies of the sacred page had told him that, in the gentle though wondrous Incarnation, “He shall come down like rain upon the fleece; and as showers falling gently upon the earth”;¹ and now in this graceful reminder of the small flakes of the manna, “beaten, as it were, with a pestle,” he saw, beneath sacramental veils, the humility and meekness of his Savior, beaten, indeed, and with cruel scourges, at the pillar; and cold and pure, with mortification and sinlessness,

¹ Ps. lxxi. 6.

like the seeming frost which here lay so cold and white on the ground; yet “having in it,” as none knew better than Stanislaus, “all that is delicious, and the sweetness of every taste.”¹ After some further enraptured moments of still unconscious delay, in the silent contemplation of the beautifully suggestive scene that thus stretched so wide before him, and in untold longings that he might partake to-day of all that lay so tenderly prefigured and signified here, he turned aside, with brow still radiant from his prayer, and, scarce pausing to bathe back his dark locks at a mountain rill that leapt near by from rock to rock, he kissed once more the humble cross his own frail hands had fashioned; and left it there, on the mountain, like the sign where the patriarch, too, had gazed from the cold night earth to the bright heaven of his God.² Then, emerging from the wood, his hands raised suppliantly for a moment

¹ Wis. xvi. 21, 22.

² Gen. xxviii. 18.

towards the distant pathway which his eager heart and glance have already swiftly spanned, he sets forth, with rapid step, upon what he fondly hopes will prove to be a last brief link in the long journey leading to the haven of his hope. And his fervent prayer was, indeed, to be granted; but in God's own still testing way; for its final realization was still to be, in a partial sense, deferred. He was to rest for a time—but only for a time—as the virtually, though not fully, accepted associate of those to whose complete companionship he so ardently aspired; and his worldly vesture, all so simple as it was, was not as yet to be exchanged for the beloved garb of the cloister. His lofty gifts from Heaven demanded yet other trials and sufferings. Another city and another saint were reserved, in God's omnipotent design, to be the scene and the instrument of his complete and final entrance to the earthly paradise of his expectant love. Rome, the

Mystic City of God, the earthly home of the Holy Ghost; Rome, other hundreds of miles away, hundreds of miles still to be trodden by those same slender and bleeding feet, ere they rest at last in their long repose, was to have the high honor of vesting this angel for heaven in the consecrated robes of deepest religion on earth, and of forming his last foot-stool and pause on the way to his heavenly home.

XIV. THE MORNING PATH-WAY

*“Quoniam angelis suis
mandavit de te.”¹*

BUT we must not unduly anticipate. We must return to love's eager fugitive in the present part of his toil, and must follow, with him, as he gains the dim roadway; where, scarce seeming to touch the dark ground, he speeds rapidly onward to the wide stretching plain. For we have wished to think mostly of Stanislaus under the guise of a traveler, sustained by a

¹ “For he hath given his angels charge over thee.”—*Ps. xc. 11.*

heavenly food; and if we dwelt long on his beauteous rest, it was only to study those depths of his soul which tell of his nourishment's heavenly source. And now, to his gladdening gaze, the river's blue waters begin to appear in the quivering light; and the towers he seeks rise from the mists of the morn. God is so burning with tenderest love for this innocent, generous child that every step of his pathway may lead to new marvels of divinest beauty and power. What we have already been permitted to see, has, even at our immeasurable distance beneath him, most wondrously exalted our privileged souls; and we feel better fitted to follow his further communion with God. We know that already we have been most singularly favored. Perhaps even other bright beauties await!

But no! They do not await! They are instant and present! For who is that bright heavenly spirit who walks with Stanislaus now? Even we, with our rude

earthly vision, can discern, in the still lingering shadows, some far-flashing beams of his glorious beauty! How gently he smiles, and with what delicate care he unerringly guides in each more intricate part of the dubious way! Ah! God never deserts the trust of His little ones. Those who really hope fully and trustingly in Him shall never be confounded. We remember the legend of this saint's visible guardian; and we see that through his deep love of God, and God's love of him, this delicate youth, who formerly knew only the way to the church and the school, has traveled, secure with this heavenly guide, through the world's most darksome mountains and vales, in the midst of strange scenes and of stranger men, for hundreds and hundreds of miles; and yet bears no mark of his premature toil, save his poor wounded feet and his thin, blanched cheek; which again, in their turn, only tell, as before, of God's fondly chastening, yet unmistakable, love. His

angel guide has been with him always; often visibly, as now; and doubtless at times with myriads of brightest heavenly comrades. We follow both, feeling in some slight measure like themselves; since we hasten on, with fatigue forgotten in heavenly delight.

And even when the advancing day has robbed, as it were, God's enviously loving providence—which, in this poor world, gives only those slender glimpses of heaven which meagerly supply our absolute need, and are indispensably necessary for us, if we are not to faint by the lonely, discouraging way—of its last fond justification for the visible presence of the guardian prince from on high; and when, therefore, to our poor gaze, Stanislaus seems once more to be walking alone; it would still be impossible to picture a scene more engaging; and this, though we were to restrict ourselves wholly to its merely natural charm. At times, we are entranced to see the youthful—almost child-

ish—wayfarer, by an unconscious, irresistible impulse, raise his seraphic eyes to heaven, and hasten on completely forgetful of the early risen peasants, who look with unfeigned wonder upon this graceful apparition; this youth attired so humbly, yet with every mark of undoubted nobility and refinement resting on every feature and investing every act; as he still hastens rapidly forward towards the waking city they have left. Yet, later, he himself remembers that he is still on earth, and still observed; and a soft flush, incomparably more delicate than even that of the morning's purpling beam, mantles his pure cheek, as he quickly bows his graceful head, and moves silently on in utmost recollection; only to forget himself again, almost immediately, as some new excess of tenderest love floods his impetuous soul, and causes him, in utter oblivion of all beside, to raise his bathed eyes again to its heavenly Author; and the

passers-by again recover the unclouded vision of his seraphic beauty, as it flashes unrestrained from his glowing cheek and upturned eye; until, still again, his drooping head and the renewed blushes of conscious and holy confusion suffuse, and seek to conceal, but only succeed in enhancing, each radiantly beautiful charm. And thus the entrancing duel between love divine and saintly reserve was continued by placid lake and shady dell, with most varying result, until the mount of his night's rest had been left far behind, and the country-folk came and went in greater numbers; so that an oppressive sense of worldly turmoil and distraction caused the strange pilgrim to urge his already rapid footsteps to even greater effort. And we, in our own splendid prerogative of spiritual observation, have had our part in this wondrous journey; a journey still on earth, as has been said; but one that has yet led swiftly away from all that earth

holds dear; one that has already partaken much less of earth than of heaven, even though it still seems deprived of its proper, its heavenly, Viaticum.

XV. VIATICUM VITAE

*“Si quis diligit me, . . .
ad eum veniemus.”¹*

BUT at length, near a wide-sweeping curve in the now flowery road, this eagerly accelerated pace of the youthful fugitive is suddenly and completely arrested. As the fleeing stag, faint with fatigue and thirst, after its long and desperate flight, when once it has fully eluded the cruelty of its relentless pursuers; though still instinctively speeding, in utmost fear,

¹ “If any one love Me, . . . We will come to him.”
—John xiv. 23.

through the forest's deepest glades, halts, foot in air, as the fountain's first ripples pulse upon its straining ear; then leaps, swift as the arrow that sought it, to their limpidly cooling source; so Stanislaus stood for an instant motionless in his rapid course; then turned from the road, and entered a woodland pathway, with a step more light than even that of the forest's antlered monarch. For his ear, too, had caught its most welcome sound, the to him incomparably entrancing music of a softly pealing bell; and, guided by its tones, his ever vigilant eye had instantly marked the spires of a noble church amongst the gently waving tree-tops. Transports of joy thrill his heaving breast; for the last thought of the night, and the first prayer of the morning, had been for Holy Communion; and now his burning wish can be fulfilled, he can receive his Savior. Already he sees the Altar, the Sacrifice, the Sacrament of Love! He knows that he is faint, that he is fast failing in the way,

that he cannot much longer endure the privation of the only support that has enabled him to travel so far already, or that can sustain his further toil. He yearns for the Bread of Heaven, as for the traveler's only real hope; and he feels that now all his longings will be satisfied. With ecstasy, too, he marks that he is still in time; since the people still come along the winding paths that thread the scrupulous pastures, or follow the deeply bending trees that border the quiet town. He feels that the Holy Mass cannot yet be over, and that soon—so soon—he can receive the Beloved of his bosom. And this fond hope of his burning heart is changed to seeming certainty, as he enters the sacred edifice, and sees that the altar is not yet in use. Sinking, his heart overwhelmed with its holy anticipations, into the soft shadow of a near-by pillar, he begins to prepare for the reception of his God, by begging pardon for his sins,—though what these could be, only a saint

could tell—and by still further inflaming, with repeated profession, his faith, his hope, and his love; as well as by thanking, with the most melting of tenderness, his God and his Mother for this infinite favor so ineffably dear to his pure and holy heart.

But oh! the continued fallacy of even holiest earthly hope! Tones fatally foreign fall upon that ear but just now entranced by its most deeply coveted sounds. It is greeted with accents strange in every sense, and alien, because not couched in the beloved Latin of the ancient Church. A dread suspicion instantly overshadows his anxious soul, a suspicion which his quickly upturned glance as instantly changes into a certainty still more appalling. From the celestial ecstasies of a moment before, at the thought of the actual presence of God, he sinks to the sudden horror of kneeling in a house of heresy. He seeks, like Saint John, to flee; but the overwhelming anguish of his

blighted hope has left him too faint for the effort. The willing feet that have steadily borne him through so many weary leagues cannot now even reach the portals through which he passed so lightly but a moment ago; and, all unable to control himself longer, his head sinks to his breast, and the floods of his grief pour forth uncontrolled from his utterly desolate soul. His frame, but just now so lightsome, and capable of any fatigue, droops heavily and helplessly against the stern marble column; which is yet not more chill than his own icy heart. His second frightened glance had met the now faded and forgotten mural decorations which told him that God, indeed, had once dwelt here; that this temple once had been, in truth, a most beautiful ark of the True and Eternal Covenant; but which also told him that it was one now desecrated and defiled by a cold, human, falsely substituted worship. He marks, with utter despair, all the chill, unbroken

barrenness of nave and chancel; and trembles convulsively, in an almost mortal rigor, as he becomes fully conscious of the last, fatal proof, the utter absence of that blood-red lamp which would have told of a divine Heart still pulsing purple within the now desolate, dust-strewn tabernacle. He almost swoons away, nor looks any longer for the gleaming lights and fragrant flowers which should have circled the repose of his Beloved. And soon, neither the bleak church nor his own gelid body were any longer present to him; for all else was lost in the ever increasing bitterness of the cruel thought that this same God, thus utterly exiled from the chosen abode of His love, must now also remain absent from the deeper and holier, though now even more lonely and desolate, tabernacle of his own desponding soul. He tries, with all his power, to be resigned to heaven's will, and to bear, with complete submission, his own incomparable loss; but the struggle is intense, and

though he has at length become silent, and though his tear-stained face has sought the protecting seclusion of the column's deeper recesses; still, some of the more kindly of the peasants, moved by his evident distress, are about to draw near, to ask the cause of this deep affliction, and to proffer aid; if, indeed, even gentlest aid can be of any use.

But oh! still higher and greater beauty! O wondrous goodness of our God! This sorrow has proved to be like unto that other, greater agony of Gethsemani; since it, too, is to have a chalice from on high, though not of earthly sorrow, but only of unalloyed celestial delight! The sinless anguish of that gentle soul has been too much even for heaven itself to bear. It has bent God's own omnipotence; and, through a splendid miracle of divinest love and compassion, the Eternal Lord of this desecrated shrine is coming once more to His ancient home; and He comes from the bosom of His Eternal Father to this fallen

and degraded sanctuary, in favor of a single ardent soul! Far above in the heavens, the white clouds are parting! Kneel! Kneel! O poor, misguided people! Heaven is here, here in your very midst, in your desecrated fane! Angels are all around you, and do you not see the noblest of them all with that far-flashing white star in his hand? We ourselves must quickly sink in awed and silent adoration. For Stanislaus no longer weeps. He kneels entranced, with hands deep folded on his throbbing breast, awaiting heaven's highest ministry. And now, his head sinks again, his face flames with light, and his soul is lost in the possession of its God. All heedless once more of those about him, he pours forth the most ardent and elevated acts of love and thanksgiving for the coming of his Savior. And have we only seemed to hear celestial harmonies, or do the angel choirs really hymn on earth the goodness of their God? Yes, they have come; myriads

of angels have really come, and have sung in their own celestial tones this moment of infinite beauty! God has so loved this weary youth, and has so pitied his holy, yet frustrated, love, that a mystic consecration has just taken place in heaven, and the sweetest of Holy Communions has taken place on earth. God has come to this little child, and floods of tenderest consolation inundate the enraptured soul. And we, after gazing—how long or short a time, we know not—are once again about to withdraw from raptures that seem too sacred for all but saintly eyes; when, once more, and again with seeming precipitancy, like the swift remembrance of his morning prayer, the duty and the purpose of our gentle saint again recall his transported mind, and urge him to the instant resumption of his painful journey. For he knows that there is a task to which he still must bend. He knows that the Manna of Heaven is meant for the toils of earth; a les-

son which every saint has fully learned, and one which our own now hastens to carry into instant, earnest execution. All abashed and confused by the crowds that press around him, he hastens to atone for his all too lovely fault of excessive union with his God; for he steals, with heaving breast and tear-dimmed eyes, from the newly consecrated church; and gently seeks, with faltering step, to regain the now forgotten road, and pursue his way to the river town. The simple country-folk, whom he now meets again, gaze with unbounded admiration upon this other and still fairer vision thus vouchsafed to their wondering eyes; upon this lovely youth, with his tattered garb, his dusty, bleeding feet, and pallid cheek; and yet with high heaven itself unmistakably stamped upon his princely brow. They think, perhaps, as he seeks to hasten away unnoticed, that some haughty sire, enraged against his handsome, boyish son, has driven him forth in the garb of a slave,

to atone for some fancied wrong. No thought of real evil could rest in the mind after even one glance of those gentle eyes. The tenderest pity follows his every step; and yet there is something which says to all that, as we ourselves have felt and said before, this is one of the most favored of all God's earthly children, one of the most blessed of all the sons of men. Nor, as we have also said, does this deep, instinctive judgment err. This gentle youth has been driven forth, indeed, but principally by a watchful Heavenly Father; and though for a time he now must bear an earthly exile's lot, it is soon to end in heaven. It is true that, with this same divine permission, he has also been exiled by the unmeant cruelty of an earthly parent's mistaken, obstinate love, and by the studied malice of a brother's unnatural hate; yet is he guarded by legions of heaven's angels; guarded and guided by heaven itself, throughout the whole course of his life's brief expanse,

miraculously nourished with heaven's own food, and soon, very soon, to be recalled to his native land on high. Ere another year, those bruised and bleeding feet shall no longer press earth's cruel pathways, those humble shreds shall give place to the splendid robes of Paradise, and those gentle eyes shall no longer know even their present ecstatic tears. For soon, and forever, tearless shall they flash, with that Infinite Light which fills and glorifies all, where faith gives place to vision, and possession satiates hope, "Where God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes: and death shall be no more, nor crying, nor sorrow shall be any more, for the former things are passed away."¹

Conscious of all this, in our own imperfect way, we reverently follow to the river's edge, and across the Danube's now sullenly swirling waters; and even, with sadly slackening pace, to the very portals which open to receive our angelic pil-

¹ Apoc. xxi. 4.

grim's form; and close, alas! to deprive us of his blessed presence, and leave us here, to think, in sad yet sweet entrancement, of all that we have seen and felt. How strongly he went, and how swiftly he sped! But he is gone from us now; and we must yield him up, for a time, to the care of saintly Canisius, and to the favored companions of his duty and his choice. Still, we are not as yet completely bereaved. We shall see him again, if only for a few brief, blessed moments, ere the greater portals of heaven shall veil him at last and forever from the lowly vision of earth.

XVI. PLEADINGS

“Sicut . . . ego vivo propter Patrem; et qui manducat me, et ipse vivet propter me.”¹

GENTLE reader, we have spoken of the Holy Viaticum. Indeed, this sacred word, so often on our lips, was the very first that we were led to utter, when, by some hidden impulse moved, we thought to write, and tell again this fairest of age-old stories. And we have spoken of Stan-

¹ “As . . . I live by the Father, so he that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me.”—John vi. 58.

islaus, and have blended these beautiful themes. We must now, perhaps, explain, and seek to justify more fully, our use of this sacred term, and our thought in applying it here, to one so young and fair. For we have now reached the supreme moment in our mystic journey, the moment in which our model and guide received the celestial Viaticum of holiest Life. And yet, Stanislaus was not dying. When he received his God, when he thus received what we have called his **Heavenly Viaticum**, he was hastening in youthful health and vigor to a life of ceaseless toil. But you have, doubtless, already anticipated the divine relation; yet still we should hope that delight, not displeasure, will be found in reverting a little more fully to the thought of the **Holy Viaticum**, as the strength of a journey on earth, and thus as the food sent by heaven to our beautiful saint; even though dark, relentless death has not as yet claimed him, nor placed its chill be-

numbing finger on the generous tides which course so eagerly, from the seraphic loves of that pure heart, to the lofty thoughts that throb beneath those snowy marble temples.

We shall only ask that this splendid miraculous Holy Communion, which we have been so highly privileged as to witness, be not taken alone, since it is only one of many; and that its buoyant power here be also held as a type of the same wondrous effects throughout his whole life of union with God. Surely, the Viaticum's older ideas of strength for even an earthly traveler's way, find a true and most beautiful meaning here. For Stanislaus was a traveler, indeed; and the Most Adorable Sacrament was ever his true, his only, Viaticum, his only real strength. Many long leagues of the Austrian highways still bore the faintly graceful impress of his holy footsteps, and we ourselves have seen that the Bavarian roads bear silent, yet eloquent, testi-

mony that his toils were still recent and severe; while the entire beauteous scene in the way-side temple has told the full story of both his utter natural weakness and his tireless supernatural strength. Nor was his sacred body the only exile through all these countless hours, and all the wide expanse of those strange, regardless lands. His angelic soul was even more alien to everything about it than was his almost spiritualized body. His very mind and heart were fleeing from a world he could not love; and from its falsely gilded maxims, which he could not but abhor. He was hastening far away from highest earthly state and splendor, in order to seek a living entombment of humility, abasement, and oblivion. His only wish for earth was to become the lowliest member of the society which bore his Savior's name; and he was thus, in very truth, as far as this world is concerned, only an outcast and a wanderer; only an exile, both in body and in mind; knowing his

own soul's deep desolation, and knowing that its desolation must endure. Although still very young, he had already and fully verified in himself what we so seldom learn, the real spirit and sense of Saint Peter's inspired and so sadly admonitive words entreating us to remember that, being strangers and pilgrims here on earth, we should mold our lives accordingly; and none, more fully than our gentle, heaven-aspiring saint, had felt the deep truth and the sadness of that other inspired seraph's yearning words, "While we are in the body we are absent from the Lord."¹ Who, therefore, shall say that this innocent child, this momentary exile in a world that was not worthy of him, this tender lily on a storm-swept mountain-side, did not need a celestial Viaticum, did not need heaven's own nourishment for his heaven-fainting soul? He himself, in this very sense, also, had fully sounded both life's deep mystery and life's

¹ 2 Cor. v. 6.

high demand. Not from linguistic lore, nor in explicit terms, but from the unmistakable longings and promptings of his own faint heart and anxious mind, he knew that life needed some support from on high, and that his soul must depend for its life and its strength on the Food alone fitted for altitudes so lofty as those where its utter detachment from earth had caused it to dwell. He knew that in life, not less than in death, man has need of his God; and whenever deprived for a time of his Savior, through the most bitter and cruellest hate, his ever death-like faintness and weakness had overwhelmingly taught him the divine truth of the words we have used on an earlier page. “Except you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, you shall not have life in you”;¹ and he thus had often marveled that the gentle Savior should have ever deemed it necessary, even in the earliest days of His Church,

¹ John vi. 54.

so fully to promulgate this daily demonstrated fact. And oh! how often and how deeply had he pondered the plenary truth and beauty of that fondly completing assurance, “For My flesh is meat indeed: and My blood is drink indeed”; ¹ as well as the mystic force, meant for earth, not less than for heaven, of those still other wondrous words—couched, not in the future, but in the very present—“He that eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, hath everlasting life”; ² hath it, that is, here and now, on earth, as well as in the future in heaven: here, imperfectly, yet truly; there, both perfectly and truly; with only the momentary deposition of the body between the two; for “I,” saith the Lord, “will raise him up in the last day.” ³ What an irresistible force and sacred fascination these direct, unequivocal words of his Savior must have had for one whose invariable response to every solicitation of earthly things had always been the simple

¹ John vi. 56.

² John vi. 55.

³ John vi. 55.

declaration, "I was made for eternity, and not for time." He already lived that eternal life, because his life was the flesh and the blood of the Son of man. He had felt all this, even in the peace of his distant, secluded home; but its entire hidden force had become fully apparent, only as he walked and slept, a stranger far from all earthly ties. He had learned full well what it was that constituted the soul's only real support in all its earthly wanderings; and thus, through all his weary pathway across the wide plain, in the mighty wood, or as he knelt entranced in some shadowy cathedral, he saw and knew no beauty, save that which streamed from the thought or the altar of his God. And, as we ourselves have seen, God Himself most wondrously confirmed this deep instinct of his faithful, loving heart, and bent to his wish; and the traveler's Vaticum came, and we have witnessed one of his angelic Holy Communions, feeling sure that our own few privileged hours

have often been as sweetly repeated in many other lonely, unobserved stretches of his silent way; doubtless, at times, under no other dome than that of the heavens themselves; and we know that what has sustained him here has also been the constant secret of his constantly wonderful strength.

We have seen, too, that when once the desire of his heart had thus been fulfilled, when once he possessed his Beloved, though ready to sink with exhaustion the moment before, his buoyant step and tireless power told that, like Elias, “He walked in the strength of that food . . . unto the mount of God.”¹ For, in very literal truth, our saint, thus nourished with this Heavenly Viaticum, walked the lofty mountains of his way with, and in, and by, his God. Strengthened by the same heavenly food, his exiled soul traveled incomparably further still; for it thus received the power to pierce far

¹ 3 Kings xix. 8.

beyond the loftiest peaks of earth, and to rise at last even to the mystic mountains of the God-head, whose all-glorious summits are reared above the gleaming heights of heaven itself. His chosen and beloved Viaticum, therefore, not only sustained the fragile frame of Stanislaus, but also filled his pilgrim soul with divinest light and beauty; in whose resplendent truth, earth's even greatest things stood weakly forth in all their native nothingness before him; causing his pure heart to turn wearily aside, and to yearn only the more strongly for the things that dwell above. Thus fortified by the exile's true strength, and guided by the exile's true light, he trod under foot, with scarcely an effort, not only the stern mountains of his material journey, but also the incomparably more lofty and more perilous heights of false earthly ideals; where many a mightier frame, but lowlier spirit, has sunk into midnight dangers, and has died undone. Verily, Stanislaus was a traveler;

and verily, for him, the Ever Adorable Sacrament of the Altar, the flesh and the blood of his God, was the true, the divine, the All-Holy Viaticum of Life. And surely, for us, it will ever be a most blessed thought to link this marvelous angelic beauty of earth with the infinite beauty of heaven.

XVII. FALLING SHADOWS

“Et non cognoscet amplius locum suum.”¹

BUT, kind reader, will it be equally well to blight this delicately beauteous picture with the pallid hues of the tomb? Must we draw at last, over those so purely lustrous eyes, the eternal veil of pitiless death? Can we ask him who, on his lonely mountain height, has taught us so well the consummate beauty and worth of the glorious Viaticum of Life, to lead us, now, adown the dark valley, and there to

¹ “And he shall know his place no more.”—Ps. cii. 16.

fall fatally stricken before us, in the bloom of his beauteous youth, to teach us, with not less of power, the final deep lessons of life's sanctified close, the infinite beauty and strength of the mystic Viaticum of Death? Ah! yes, gentle reader, we can, and we must; for death's dark shadow is already upon him, without any wish of our own; and his footsteps, though noiseless and lightsome, are swiftly yet silently seeking the grave.

The final, fully resonant chord of life's true harmony can be struck only in heaven, though many of its sweetest tones are lent, at times, to even the dominant discords of earth; and the sacred beauty of Stanislaus has now mounted so high that it irresistibly claims its final, celestial completion. We, therefore, who love him, must now touch, once again, the same saddening notes that wailed in our opening words. So far as this world's fleeting life is concerned, we have all seen the truth of the Scriptural maxim, "Favor is

deceitful, and beauty is vain";¹ and even the sanctified and graceful refinement lent by heaven to the beauteous material being of Stanislaus is, after all, only a kind of gentle delusion; a delicate prelude—but only a prelude—to a gloriously genuine type, to be actually realized, only in those wondrous realms of true and imperishable beauty which lie just beyond the chastening grave. Indeed, we all know that the fairer the flower the sooner must it fade; and Stanislaus is far too delicately beautiful, even in the sense of this world, to much longer withstand the chill and the gloom of arid earthly scenes and of icy earthly hearts. We have already felt that we could not possess him much longer. In truth, we have known, though we dared not confess, that he really was dying now, before our very eyes. We have felt the desolate, saddening truth that in a few short months, earth shall know him no more. Though, therefore, the hour at

¹ Prov. xxxi. 30.

length has come to change the long tenor of our sacred theme, and to think of our Savior again as the wayfarer's friend, only in regard to that last great journey which unites the nearer bounds of eternity and of time, our exemplar must still remain the same. We must not, and should not, leave our gentle saint; for that love which is stronger than death should pass through its portals with him, and share his eternal life. Piety, too, not less than affection, may well wish to remain at his side; for in his most sacred passing, this other mighty aspect, also, of the Most Holy Viaticum is soon to be most fully and most beautifully verified and most vividly portrayed. In very truth, this angelic youth had never lived, in the common, earthly sense of that term. Unconsciously, his whole brief span on earth had been summed up in St. Paul's "desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ."¹ Like that same great seraph of divinest love, he could also have

¹ Phil. i. 23.

truly protested, "To me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain."¹ From his first Holy Communion to his last, it might have been most truly said that he was always receiving the Viaticum of the Dying, as well as that of the Living; for his soul was ever struggling to free itself more and more fully from the depressing weight of the body; and his entire being was striving to rise ever more and more rapidly, above all the fading things of the earth, to the blessed immortality of heaven. He was ever more and more fully dying, that he might the more fully and the sooner live; and death, in all its own stern reality, shall soon stand cold and silent before his eager gaze and our own tear-dimmed eyes. Its rapid and real approach warns us no longer to defer our desolate preparation for the confronting of bright and beautiful life with dark, repellent death; but to follow, instead, the wise and orderly pre-
vision of God Himself, by remembering

¹ Phil. i. 21.

that it was in the last two years of the saint's earthly life that many of heaven's most wondrous favors were lavished upon him; and that the Savior thus often and miraculously came, precisely at a period in which the swift mounting ardors of seraphic love were testing ever more and more perilously the frail and yielding ties that linked the sacred body of Stanislaus with his still more sacred soul. An ever increasing and ever more beautiful, resemblance may thus be deeply marked between the later wondrous Communions of this radiant soul and the Holy Viaticum as applied to the dying hour; with the further undoubted consequence and conclusion that these marvelous unions with God had a special reference and a special relation to the rapidly approaching moment when, through the finally irresistible impetus and excess of the higher sanctity and the higher love, the already enfeebled bonds of his earthly being would at last be wholly sundered, and his pure young soul,

leaving his beautiful body for a time, would mount in unimpeded flight to God.

Yes, whatever is intrinsically and loftily true possesses a certain infinity; since it cannot but share, to some degree, the il-limitable grandeur of Him who is the secret of all beauty and all power; and the lives of the saints thus share in the infinite magnificence of God Himself, and must, therefore, yield an inexhaustible wealth of spiritual suggestiveness and beauty. And, surely, a most exalted and refined illustration of divinest magnificence thus lent to a faithful soul has been given by Stanislaus, in each ever mounting development of his exquisite piety, iridescent with each more delicate charm; and especially in the splendid effects wrought in his soul by the miraculous receptions of his Divine Lord which marked his marvelous later life. In these wondrously sacred final years, he had more than once not only received the Bread of the Angels in the most unusual manner; but, as if

to indicate that he already pertained more fully to heaven than to even the holiest things of earth, he had also repeatedly received it from ministering angelic hands; and, on one supremely and ineffably entrancing occasion, to which we have already referred, the great Queen of the Angels herself, the very Mother of God, gave him Holy Communion, in the most deeply engaging sense that she visibly resigned her beauteous heavenly infant to the timidly outstretched arms of her fond earthly child; a form of divine union surely not less fruitful of love or of grace than the veiled sacramental blending of the soul with its God; and not, therefore, less worthy of this holiest name, not less worthy of being considered, at this time of the saint's waning life, as a most tender and beautiful Holy Viat-icum; the more so, since this wondrous visit of his infant God, and the first of these angelic ministrations took place when Stanislaus really lay most griev-

ously ill, and when he himself was waiting only to die. Mary's visit, moreover, and these later wayside Communions, were all closely connected with his coming admission into a society in whose membership he was to take only the first few preparatory paces preliminary, not to a long life on earth, but to his rapidly approaching entrance into heaven. By divine ordination, he was thus to linger on earth even less than a year after his final earthly retirement; and this, not so much for himself, as to show, with resplendent beauty, what a novice in the new society should be. He was then to pass, his evanescent task fulfilled, to his celestial home, and to the high supernatural companionship proper to his pure, angelic soul. Ere then, other hundreds of leagues were yet to bring him, still a pilgrim and still a postulant, to the Eternal City; in whose maternal bosom his loved Mother's behest was at last to be fulfilled; and where her quickly succeeding Assump-

tion was to mark at once the close of his earthly career and the dawn of his natal day in heaven. His Guardian's frequently visible presence, too, in these most holy later years seems only another sign of the greater and more solicitous vigilance proper for this final and critical part of the way. And on this last intervening link of his earthly journey, in his pathway to Rome, the eternal gateway to his eternal home, his sole strength was to be what it had always been, the Most Blessed Sacrament, the weary earthly pilgrim's only true Viaticum, the Viaticum of fainting and faltering Life; a Viaticum, nevertheless, intended, in God's ever-thoughtful, infinitely wise, and well-ordered providence, in the case of our saint, as in our own, to lead unerringly to that other and last divine Visitation, the all-beauteous Viaticum of Death.

XVIII VIATICUM MORTIS

*“Illuminare his qui in
tenebris et in umbra
mortis sedent.”¹*

AND now, far away, on a bright Assumption morn, far away in beauteous Italy, and in the Eternal City itself, where the Quirinal Hill rises gently, to receive the first opal tints of the deep-mantling Italian sky, a gentle and graceful youth lay dying. Grave priests and saddened fellow-novices stood silently

¹ “To enlighten them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death.”—Luke i. 79.

and tearfully meditative at his bedside, or reverently bent low, to receive some last devout expression, or render some final, delicately thoughtful service of sympathy and love. For it was only too evident that the arduous course of high Christian perfection so nobly entered, was here to find its final term, before it had seemed to have well begun. And any-one favored enough to have seen the beauteous pilgrim youth of the Austrian highways would have easily recognized here again, in these blanched, yet supernaturally refined and peaceful features, the angelic lineaments of the gentle Saint Stanislaus Kostka; and thus knowing his beautiful story, would also at once have divined the reason and cause of an intense, yet restrained, exultation and happiness, which marked even the saddened faces of all, and of none more than that of the dying youth himself; a sense of sacred, triumphant joy which gleamed in every eye, and only increased with each

added moment of this undoubted approach of death.

For all here felt—as we ourselves felt so long before—that they were the privileged witnesses of most extraordinary supernatural favors. All knew that this temporal dissolution of the body was also the eternal birthday of a glorious soul. They knew that in a few brief moments this all but sinless being, dying here by a law of excessive love, rather than by that of our common doom, would be in heaven, assisting at the glorious Assumption feast of Mary, at the very side of her who was too sinless to die, even at love's supreme behest; and whom he had always so justly and so tenderly called his dearest Mother. They knew that, like a little child, he had trustingly written to her the day before, while still in perfect health and strength, telling her he had already been kept too long away from her dear side, and entreating that he might be detained no

longer; but might through her love, be allowed to be really with her, on the day of her glorious feast. And they knew that his present sacred passing was only her prompt affirmative response. Yesterday, he was strong and well, with youth's own springing health and vigor. To-day shall have no evening for that glorious soul. His earthly moments are now but few, indeed; for, while we have been speaking, Death, the Last Great Sanctifier, has been softly, yet steadily, setting eternity's stranger and higher seal of beauty upon the faultless features that no earthly illness has ever been allowed to mar; and has thus mystically prepared them for each more delicate loveliness of heaven, so soon to invest them with its own transfiguring and fadeless charm. Those drooping lids now closing calmly to all the things of earth, are also about to unfold amidst scenes of rapturous celestial beauty; and those veiled orbs from which every light of

earth is fading, will soon be flashing resplendent with the untold glory of another world. It is time to think of the Holy Viaticum, and for us to bend once more before it, as it comes to him now, to take its last place, as the mighty Companion of that wondrous journey, Death.

For, with this most beautiful scene, we fully return to our first sad thought of this most sacred word. This is death; not, indeed, as we usually see it, but not the less truly death; and this is the same Viaticum of which we first spoke, though in one of its highest forms. He who so gladly comes to even the most abandoned sinner, will not desert this faithful, loving child. And his last Viaticum shall not be unlike his first; for Mary shall not be absent from it, and his own preparation, as well as God's last earthly favors, shall not be unlike those other gloriously miraculous anticipations of this supremely beauteous hour; but will only form their

proper supernatural culmination and their fitting ultimate term.

For Mary came again in these last earthly moments, surrounded by angels and saints. The Divine Hostage of his soul already rested in his ecstatic bosom, given now by the consecrated ministry of his other tenderly beloved Mother, the Holy Church of God, in whose maternal bosom he had received his first graces, and now, for the last time, reposed; that gentlest Mother to whose ineffably solicitous care even Mary could now safely resign, as God Himself had already resigned, for these last and most sacred moments, even this incomparable treasure of heavenly innocence and beauty.

And death really came at last, though the yearning saint sank to his last repose so calmly and so sweetly that none could mark the wondrous moment in which his gentle eyes failed at last and forever for the common light of earth, and began to flash with the immortal glory of heaven.

Only when they no longer responded to Mary's beloved image—as one of his fond chroniclers has so beautifully said—were the watchers sure that he was gazing upon the supremely lovely original. Only when he no longer murmured his words of sacred love, did they remember that this must be a slumber much more deep than even that of the mountain's midnight; and that its awakening would summon those sacred members, not to any further earthly effort, but to heaven's gleaming heights. Only when that seraphic breast grew steadily chill, even after Holy Communion, did they realize that its thanksgiving was being made in heaven, and that the silent, pulseless heart would leap into rapturous, ecstatic action again, only under the Resurrection's eternally vivifying touch. But they then knew, indeed, that the glowing cheek and the still remaining smile of peace were only the last fair traces of the soul's blissful parting, only a last deep promise made, as it

were, to that gentle, beautiful body which had so faithfully and so constantly fulfilled its Creator's ennobling injunction to "present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing unto God";¹ and they knew that the deep, strange beauty which hovered about it now was but the heavenly presage and pledge of what it would be, when the delicately just goodness of God would restore it, on the day of final award, to the blest companion of its faultless earthly life.

Stanislaus is not a traveler now. He no longer has need of the sacred Viaticum of Life or of that of Death. His life is blended into the life of God; and he lives, and shall forever live, in its infinite glory and power. He is at home. At home forever. He is at rest. At rest forever, in the bosom of his God. Earth shall never feel his lightsome footstep again. The priceless gift of his supernatural beauty has been eternally withdrawn from

¹ Rom. xii. 1.

a world too carnal to recognize its supernal charm. We have been privileged far beyond the most of men, by even our brief imperfect vision of its magnificently glorious splendor; but our only further hope must lie beyond the grave. The clouds have veiled him forever from our earthly view. He lived, and he died, in the strength and the love of the Most Blessed Sacrament; and all that we saw by river or plain was simply its beauty transfused to his soul. Truest Life and truest Death stood side by side throughout his entire life, and at his holy parting; and the infinite Reason for both, the Heavenly Viaticum of Life and of Death, had ever lain secure, deep hid in his heart of hearts. We have meant that each word fondly telling his praise should return, like his thought, to its infinite origin; and thus trace his beauty to its heavenly source. The mind sinks exhausted at the thought of his further magnificences, and leaves them untold, as

it must, for some hour in heaven's deep vales. But even he knows now, as not even he knew then, all that was meant by these living and dying visits of God. Oh! that he would but speak, and tell us, who still falter and fall, the strength and the power and beauty of Him who stands ever faithful at our perilous side from life's first weak breath to its last!

XIX. PILGRIMS OF EMMAUS

“Mane nobiscum, quoniam advesperascit . . . et intravit cum illis.”¹

THE storms of centuries have since swept our saintly pilgrim's erstwhile mountain pallet, and the Danube still frets and rolls from the Black Forest to the Euxine's heaving bosom. But they hold no memorials of the heavenly youth who once blessed them awhile with his gentle presence, as he rapidly passed on

¹ “Stay with us, because it is towards evening . . . and He went in with them.”—Luke xxiv. 29.

his heavenward way. Only the lilies that bloom each year from Vienna down to Rome seem to retain in perpetual honor the sweet memory of him who once formed their so fitting companion; unless indeed, the violets, too, as they shrink among the rocks, are wishing, if they could but dare, to blend their own subtlest purple with the lily's heart of snow, and thus record forever the delicate saintly blushes that so often rose and mantled on his stainless cheek and brow. The glorious Faith, in its deathless life, has risen again in some of those desolate lands; and the Lord once more is reigning in some of His desecrated fanes. But Stanislaus is gone, and the rude, carnal world has paid no more attention to his beauteous death than it did to his beauteous life, because it has never understood either.

Yet, not so with all; and no fervent soul need feel that this gentle saint is separated from it wholly and forever;

that he never looks down to the earth he once trod; or that he can now be all careless or indifferent to those whom God still loves even here. Do not the remembered pangs of his own bitter earthly exile melt his gentle soul with tender compassion for us who still must wander and struggle in life's desolate pathways? Is the great Communion of Saints an empty doctrine wholly null and void? Ah, no! In the higher light and purer love of heaven, that gentle heart cannot be less than it was here; and we therefore know that we still possess, and shall always possess, the exalted care and affection of that generous, noble soul. The only real difference is that its faithful, unfaltering kindness is now of the higher, invisible order.

On our own part, should we not ask ourselves whether these high things have not a meaning, a reference, a lesson, for us, who still must travel the years and their changes, growing weaker with each

added toil? The answer, surely, must be, "Yes." What are they? Each soul must give its own response, though all will be rich with heaven's own grace and beauty. But, surely, we all should undoubtedly see, in our ever increasing sorrows, a continual, serious warning that even in life we are in the very midst of death; that each day brings us greater and greater struggles, but less and less of courage and readiness to meet them; and that there can be but one end for ever increasing burdens to be borne by ever decreasing strength. We should always strive to remember that, as the Scripture, using the words of Lysias says, "We decay daily, and our provision of food is small, and the place we lay siege to is strong, and it lieth upon us to take order for the affairs of the kingdom."¹ Yes, the affairs of a kingdom more noble than earth ever has seen, daily demand our deepest and best consideration; a

¹ 1 Mach. vi. 57.

kingdom that Christ Himself has said “suffereth violence,” and of which He further declares that, “the violent bear it away.”¹ But, above all, we should ever remember and ponder His other, supplementary words, that the severely testing struggle thus indicated cannot be borne without heavenly food; that we cannot be victors, without Him in our hearts; for His loving, yet warning, decree must ever return, “Except you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, you shall not have life in you.”²

But with all that is noble within us, we should render Him thanks for this inexorable spiritual necessity, and still more for the wondrously supernatural Means which He gave, in order to meet its exalted, celestial yet tender, demand. For man is too loftily free merely to eat and to sleep and to die, like the senseless brutes of the field. His food and his life must be such as prepare for the infinite

¹ Matt. xi. 12.

² John vi. 54.

glory of heaven. But this splendid destiny's dangers share its magnificent sweep, and dispute until death for an eternally fatal supremacy; while the ruin of souls all around us proves that not all these fell efforts are vain. We are gross with the world and the body. Sin tainted our earliest breath; and we ourselves, in an obstinate, insanely perverse volition, follow more willingly the lower demands of the flesh. We desire most strongly that which is present and seen. We loathe what is distant, and reject what is even but slightly unknown; while heaven is hidden behind the dark tomb, and Jesus refuses His vision of beauty to eyes that are carnal with sin. Unless, then, we seek some celestial refinement for hearts that are selfish and minds that are dull, we shall hopelessly grovel in earth's basest slime, and attain to true human stature, only as eternally suffering victims of eternally magnificent pain; for each of our great possibilities involves an in-

finite attribute, and Justice or Love, both divine, must finally reign.

Yet this Lord of all power has loved us, and has given Himself for our strength; did not our unreasoning pride, so unfounded, render even His infinite action so vain. "In the world, you shall have distress," He consolingly said, "but have confidence, I have overcome the world";¹ thus speaking, to show He had conquered it, not for Himself alone, but also, and even more fully, for us; so that, through all our harassing troubles, we can feel that we, also, shall conquer in His glorious name. But, by His own divine ordination, as we have with all certainty seen, He must be received in Life's sacred Viaticum, He must come to our hearts, in order to help us most fully there; and He must rest often within us, if He ever is fully to reign.

"In this sign shalt thou conquer," the heavens declared, in the earlier, less spir-

¹ John xvi. 33.

itual days, while the Cross shone resplendent within their blue depths; because at that time a world crude and carnal was yet to be drawn to Christ's standard by open, visible means. Our own more delicate presage of supernatural victory must lie in the small white Host deep veiled by the Altar's sacred seclusion; for ours are days of more intimate, hidden, personal struggle; these are the later, more difficult and dangerous, yet loftier hours, in which even faith must be constantly challenged by the seeming abasement and absence of God; days, nevertheless, most fully foreseen and most fully intended by the omniscient Lord, when, spanning the centuries, and speaking to us, He so solemnly said, "Blessed are they that have not seen, and have believed."¹ Yea, blessed, thrice blessed, are they who, throughout all the ages of this coarsely visible maze, can rise over all, and adore, in loftiest spirit and truth, the in-

¹ John xx. 29.

visible, infinite God! And blessed, a thousand times blessed, are they who still feel, with hearts all aflame, the fond wounds in the hands and the side of their Savior, though now buried deep in a Sacrament's silent snow. And blessed, with an infinite blessing, is the once proudly sceptical heart that at last, in the fulness of love, can say to Him there, with Saint Thomas, "My Lord and my God!"¹

For though that Humanity, veiled by the skies, shall never again walk the earth amongst men, He yet dwells in our midst, our Emmanuel, "God with us," as Isaias so loved to proclaim Him,² though but seen through the ages, and written in ancient, prophetical lore; and now, the great figure fulfilled, though the world has grown darker without, the pure soul shall see and possess Him, in His covert of Love,³ as the Savior gave promise,⁴ and Stanislaus saw, with a mystic and marvel-

¹ John xx. 28.

³ Is. iv. 6.

² Is. vii. 14; viii. 8.

⁴ Matt. v. 8.

ous clearness, all sufficient to preface the unlimited glory of His heavenly home; and even our own lowly hearts, deep blessed by His presence, may glow like a seraph's before the white Altar as it flashes bright flecked with the crimson of heaven, and may kindle most deeply and purely within us, through the harsh outer world's dreary doubting and gloom; as the Master, though hidden, speaks low to our listening souls, and opens the sense of the Scriptures, as He walks at our side in the rapturous bliss of our heavenly way.¹

When, therefore, hard pressed from without and within, undone by the heat and the wounds of the world's mortal conflict, we are faint, and seem ready to fall; we should haste, at each lull in the pitiless strife, to the Altar's cool shade, and drink deep at the spring of our Savior's torn side, at those wounds which He, also, received from that same deicide world which now seeks Him again in ourselves,

¹ Luke xxiv. 32.

His members of flesh. At those heavenly fountains empurpled with infinite grace, we should seek the sole strength that can serve in a combat so deadly; and thus, with intelligence, love, and respect, most eagerly recognize, revere, and receive the all-beauteous, all-tender, refreshing, consoling, and strengthening Viaticum of even our present so lowly and seemingly ignominious life.

And when the long struggle is nearing its end; when our foes have been weakened, and we are weak, too; when youth's eagle glance has forever been dimmed, and manhood's firm vigor is gone; when our step has grown slow from our plodding so far, and the tide of our life pulses feebly in a chilled and a timorous breast; we still may retain at least strength to repeat, and now with the deepest and fondest of meaning, our faltering heart's last, lonely appeal, "Mane nobiscum," Domine, "quoniam advesperascit, et inclinata est jam dies." "Stay with us," O

Lord, “because it is towards evening, and the day is now far spent.”¹

And, surely, regarding the final, the last dread hour, when everything earthly has come to a close, and we ourselves can no longer record even holiest thought; some kind future hand may tremblingly write of us, and of our deep-yearning, surprised, and delighted love, as we now so fondly write and read of others, “Et intravit cum illis,” “And He went in with them.”² Surely, we, too, as He comes to our side, and prepares the last Food of the soul’s weary exile, shall most lovingly recognize the gentle Master again in the breaking of Bread³ for our heavenward journey; and surely, when He afterwards fades from our dying eyes,⁴ and His visible presence is lost in the depths of our chastened and penitent souls, we may sink without fear, even to death’s fatal slumber, in the out-spreading arms of the failing heart’s

¹ Luke xxiv. 29.

² Luke xxiv. 29.

³ Luke xxiv. 31, 35.

⁴ Luke xxiv. 31.

Paraclete, and exulting awake for eternity's ominous course, sustained and allured by the all-tender, all-beautiful Viaticum of calmest and holiest Death! Possessing the glorious Reality, may we not feel, in our own so deeply blessed souls, what the incomparably less fortunate, yet still rapturous, Psalmist could see, and could say, only in pale, far-distant vision, "For though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death, I will fear no evils, for Thou art with me."¹

Surely, we may hope that Stanislaus will pray for us, that Mary will watch over us, and that our Savior will come to us, both in life and in death; and even more surely in life than in death, since the struggle is longer and deeper, and the peril more pressing and dread! And thus, surely, as the Master intended, both for nations and men, throughout our whole earthly career, in its noon-day and night, in its joy and its sorrow, we all may

¹ Ps. xxii. 4.

receive, with courage and strength, this heavenly nourishment, this ineffably sacred provision for our earthly and heavenly way, this first sad, then most beautiful, Viaticum Vitæ Mortisque, the Holy Viaticum of Life as of Death.

*"Tantum ergo Sacramentum
Veneremur cernui."*

"Before a Sacrament so great
Let us then adoring bow."



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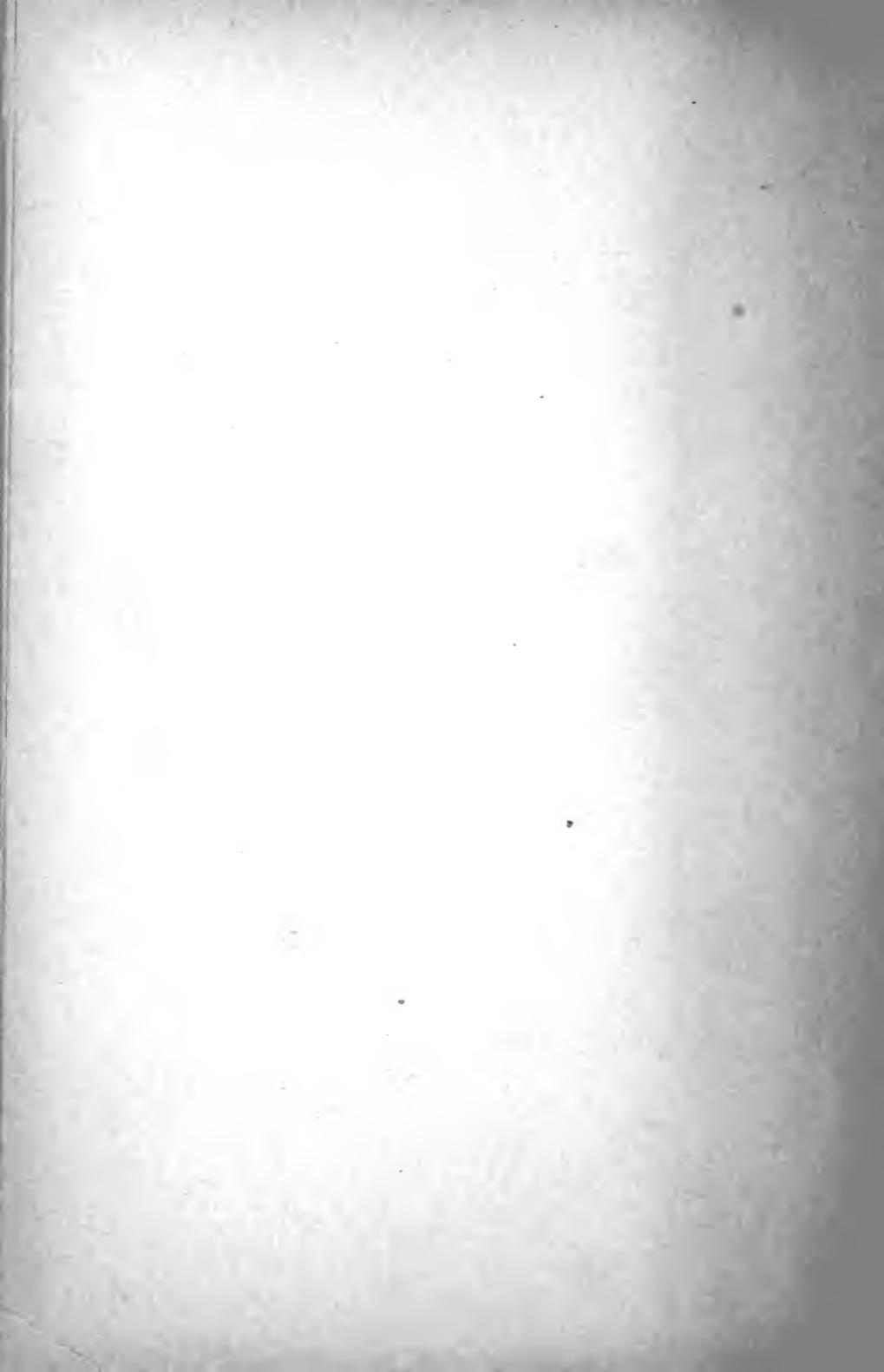
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